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Mombasa Mission
The Growth of the Church
in Mombasa, Kenya 1888 - 1990

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Mombasa Mission
The Growth of the Church in Mombasa, Kenya
1888-1990
by Edward Corcoran CSSp

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Archbishop John Njenga of Mombasa

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write these few words welcoming Fr Edward Corcoran's *Mombasa Mission 1888-1990*. He traces the history of our present archdiocese from its humble beginnings in Zanzibar whose boundaries were 1,300 miles along the coast of East Africa and literally limitless inland from there – an area which was confided to the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1883.

We then see how this vast area was gradually broken up into other vicariates which were given into the care of other missionary groups, notably the pioneering Consolata and Mill Hill Fathers. We follow the ever progressive path of evangelisation through the establishment of the hierarchy to the present day ecclesiastical organisation of the Church in Kenya.

This history is all-embracing, being divided into chronological periods: The Portuguese Period, The Modern Missionary Period, Expansion and Consolidation. It describes in interesting detail the trials and hardships of the early missionaries, priests, brothers and sisters. It shows clearly how the young and vibrant local church of today is shouldering its responsibilities with enthusiasm and fervour.

I sincerely recommend this lively and interesting history to all my co-workers in our archdiocese – priests, religious, laity – as a means of giving them a better understanding of what they have inherited and of encouraging them to pass it on faithfully to future generations.

John Njenga

Archbishop of Mombasa



*Mgr Alexander Le Roy CSSp
Pioneer of Mombasa Mission*



*Bishop Eugene Butler CSSp,
First Bishop of Mombasa*

Introduction

“Some are born great; others have greatness thrust upon them”. I certainly was not born a historian, but had the role thrust upon me! When the first Mombasa Diocesan Centenary Committee was set up by Bishop Nicodemus Kirima I was asked to write a short history of the Diocese with special emphasis on the early missionary days. The result is this *opus parvum* which I hope will give some idea of the sowing of the seed a hundred years ago, its slow and, at times, agonising growth as a seedling and plant, followed in God’s own good time by a fruitful blossoming in full maturity.

This booklet is not an academic product. There are no footnotes or annotations. There are no references to erudite histories to which, in any case, I had no access. Apart from Part 1 on the Portuguese Period, my only sources were the journals which early Holy Ghost missionaries kept so meticulously. Thus my history is seen through the eyes of those in the field, for which reason it is very human. We see their weaknesses and their spiritual strengths; we see their joys, their sorrows, their ups, their downs... the latter often seeming to come to us *de profundis*, from the depths.

For the more recent history, I am grateful to my Holy Ghost confreres, particularly Frs Edmund Ryan, Thomas Roche and Michael Madigan (since deceased) who filled me in on many details concerning places like the Tana River, Bura and Giriama, and Fr Martin Keane who supplied most of the material on the local church. I am also grateful to the different congregations of Sisters who sent me written material on their histories.

Finally a word of thanks to Mrs. Hasu Silveira, Miss Moira Okello and Miss Betty Rugina who typed the final manuscript and Mrs Margaret O’Sullivan who typeset the text for publication.

I hope it will not be taken amiss if so much accent has been placed on the work of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Mombasa. Being the pioneers, and for many years the only missionary congregation in this area, it had to be so. It is to their two patrons, the Holy Spirit and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that I dedicate this book on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15th, 1990.

Fr Edward Corcoran CSSp

PART I

THE PORTUGUESE PERIOD

CHAPTER I

Christianity Reaches Mombasa

“Let’s start at the very beginning – a very good place to start”. So Maria tells the Von Trapp children in the musical *The Sound of Music*. Why not let us do the same? And for our history of the faith in modern Kenya, with special reference to the Diocese of Mombasa which corresponds to the civic region of the Coast Province, we find the beginning in the second verse of Genesis. There we read: “...God’s spirit hovered over the waters”. And, of course, part of that vast expanse of water was what we know today as the Indian Ocean, the only passage-way from the outside world, until comparatively recent times, to that strip of Coastal East Africa we call the Kenya Coast. God’s Spirit hovered over this stretch of ocean for centuries, watching the comings and goings of the earliest seafarers through it. Among these were possibly Assyrians as early as 3000 BC; Jews and Phoenicians around 2000 BC; Azanian settlers from the southern end of the Red Sea. It is interesting to note in passing that Mama Ngina Drive along the seafront in Mombasa was originally called Azania Drive.

Every Kenyan school student learns that the first written account of trade along the East Coast of Africa was the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, dating from the latter half of the first century AD. Mombasa is not mentioned by name, but very likely it offered a haven to these early travellers even if it had not yet become a trading centre worthy of mention. The inhabitants of this part of the Coast at this time were probably African tribes, not of Bantu origin, among whom had settled people of the Arabian Peninsula, principally from Yemen and the South Arabian Coast.

THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM

God’s Spirit, still hovering over these waters, had not yet directed seafarers who believed in the One True God as far as Mombasa. It would seem that the first knowledge of the the God of Abraham was brought to these shores by Muslim traders in the ninth and tenth centuries AD, a period which saw a great upsurge in trade with Persia and Oman. Mombasa is mentioned in an account of a visit to these parts by Ibn Batuta about 1330 and is described as a large city abounding with banana, lemon and citron; the chief food was fish and bananas; the inhabitants were Shafite Sunnis who were “religious, chaste and virtuous”. The town’s mosques were solidly built of wood. Islamic culture at the Coast reached its height from 1200 to 1500, during which period Mombasa became, after Kilwa further South, the second most important town in East African coastal waters.

CHRISTIANITY COMES TO MOMBASA

The first sight of the emblem of Christianity in these parts was that of the huge cross emblazoned on the mainsail of the flagship of Bartholomeo Diaz who rounded what he called the Cape of Storms with a small Portuguese fleet in 1487. The King of Portugal, who had not had to experience such storms, rechristened it the Cape of Good Hope. Diaz is not mentioned in connection with Mombasa – the more famous Vasco da Gama appears to have been the first Portuguese to call there. This was in April, 1498.



1498: Vasco da Gama Pillar, Malindi

After an apparently friendly welcome accorded them, the Portuguese learned of an Arab plot to seize their fleet in retribution for Portuguese action against their brothers earlier on at Mozambique. This friction was the beginning of the hatred that existed thereafter between the Arabs and the Portuguese right up to 1729 which saw the end of the latter's influence in East Africa. Vasco da Gama continued on his journey and made a brief stay at Malindi. He was well received there, and on his return trip from Goa, was allowed to erect a large cross on the seashore. This cross, bearing the coat of arms of the King of Portugal, is still standing today, although not on the original site.

Vasco da Gama made a second trip to Goa in 1502, and on this occasion stayed some time at Kilwa. As he made ready to sail, he discovered some two hundred Muslim women who had been smuggled on board the ships by his sailors, declaring that they wished to leave their husbands and embrace Christianity instead. Da Gama would have none of it, finding the women "of slender virtue" and finding his crew's motives suspicious to say the least of it. When he started repatriating the would-be converts, he found himself

landed with some forty whose husbands refused to take them back. And so these ladies of Kilwa were accepted by the Portuguese and kept on board becoming, doubtlessly, the first known “converts” to Christianity in East Africa. Coming back to our home waters, we find the Portuguese making their first permanent settlement – or factory, as such settlements were called – at Malindi, and not Mombasa, in 1505. At this, Kilwa’s power began to wane, and until the building of Fort Jesus in Mombasa in 1593, Malindi was the only important settlement of the Portuguese north of Mozambique. That is why we find the name of our next Portuguese in this journey of faith, St. Francis Xavier, associated with Malindi, and not with Mombasa.

St. Francis Xavier sailed up along the East African Coast on his way to Goa in 1542, and, in a letter to his Jesuit superiors in Rome, he describes his stop over there in April of that year. “We visited a city inhabited by Moors (i.e. Arabs) who are at peace with us”, he writes. “We learn that Portuguese merchants were usually found there, and that the Christians who died there were interred ‘in tombs of great size with crosses on them’ ”. He mentions the Vasco da Gama cross “gilded and very beautiful”. It is with great pride that he writes: “The Lord God knows what comfort it gave us to see it, conscious as we are how great is the virtue of the cross, standing thus solitary and victorious in a Moorish land”. St Francis buried a sailor who had died on board and said that the Muslims were greatly edified with “...the way we Christians have of burying the dead”. Before continuing his journey he had lengthy discussions with some of the leading members of the Muslim community, at the end of which he tells us that “...their point of view remained unchanged... and so did mine”. Mosque attendance was a worry for one of their religious leaders. He told Francis that the faithful were attending only three out of seventeen mosques in the town, and to those only a handful went regularly. He wanted to know if Christians had the same problem. From Malindi Francis headed north again and describes a visit to the island of Socotra (to which we shall return later on), and then ends his letter suddenly with the words “we reached the city of Goa on 6th May, 1542” (over a year since they had sailed from Lisbon). Francis was only thirty-six years old and had but another ten years to live. This great pioneer missionary to the East Indies and Japan, signed his letter with the utmost humility: “Your useless brother in Christ”. “Useless” as he may have been in his own estimation, he remains today patron of missionaries; and on a more modest scale his feast is celebrated with special devotion in Kenya by his spiritual children, the Goan Catholic community.

As far as Christianity is concerned, the first stirrings seem to have been in the island of Socotra in the northern part of the Indian Ocean. We have alluded to a description of St Francis Xavier's visit there. Christianity was brought there by Christian Arabs as early as 524 AD when Cosmas Indicopleustes visited the island. We cannot say why missionary activity did not radiate from there, nor is there any trace of any penetration of Christianity further south on the well defined trade route along the East Coast of Africa. What Christianity remained on the island itself was in a sorry state when St Francis Xavier called there. There was no longer a bishop or an ordained clergy; the inhabitants "...are Christians in their own opinion", according to Francis, "and pride themselves on having Christian names to prove it; they have churches and crosses and lamps; their 'clerics' do not know how to read or write; they know a lot of prayers by heart; they go to church at midnight, in the morning, at the hour of Vespers and in the evening at Compline time; the people are followers of St Thomas; these clerics do not baptise nor do they know what baptism is". Many of them implored Francis to remain with them and to introduce them to baptism and the Mass, but the Governor would not allow him to remain for fear of the Turks who used to come to this island, and who probably would make Francis prisoner. So he set sail and left behind him what we might call only a vestige of Christianity.

Returning to the southern shores of the Indian Ocean, we find that the first sign of a settled clergy was at Kilwa in 1505. In that year Francisco d'Almeida erected a fort there and left behind two Franciscan priests as chaplains to the soldiers. The following year forty men and women asked for baptism. The Sultan forbade it but the Captain of the garrison recorded in a report, "It appeared to me that I ought not deny them the water of baptism". The Kilwa settlement was dismantled in 1512 as unprofitable, and thereafter no more is heard of the Franciscans there. Presumably they left with the Portuguese – a foretaste of what was to happen later in all the Portuguese settlements along the East Coast and a clear warning of the dangers involved in tying missionary activity to the apron strings of the civil authority. In 1554, the Viceroy of Goa, gave instructions for the preaching of the Gospel in Mombasa, but when the Jesuit Fr Monclaro visited there in 1569 nothing had been done. It was not until the Portuguese had completed the building of Fort Jesus at Mombasa in 1596, thus making Mombasa their main settlement along the coast, that any serious effort was made in the field of evangelisation, however meagre and shortlived its results were to be.

Augustinian Canons were sent from Goa and by 1598 we find them at Faza, Pate and Lamu, but only the foundation at Faza had any permanency.

In 1606 a Franciscan, Gaspar da Santo Bernardino, visited the Augustinians there and found the Muslim King favourable to Christianity. The reason for his favourable disposition was that "...while I had no Christian church in my city, I lived in fear. Now, however, I live well content in peace because in the Church I have walls which guard my city, and in the Fathers, soldiers to defend it". By a stretch of the imagination, might we call this situation an example of the Church Militant? In 1624 another Franciscan, Jerome Lobo, visited Faza and celebrated the Holy Week ceremonies there with the four resident Augustinians and seventy Christians. Missionary work seems to have begun somewhat later on the island of Zanzibar and it is not until 1634 that we hear mention of a little church there. Little detail of its history has come down to us, and a veil is drawn over this important island's connection with Christianity, not to be removed for over two hundred years.

CHRISTIANITY IN MOMBASA

Finally, in our search for the earliest gropings of Christianity for a foothold in these parts, let us return to Mombasa which had now become the most important settlement of the Portuguese north of Mozambique. In 1599 we find four Augustinians there and they were able to report some six hundred converts, among them the exiled King of Pemba. As regards the Portuguese, as well as the soldiers in the garrison, there were up to fifty civilian families living at any one time in the Mombasa Christian community, bringing its total probably to something in the region of a thousand. We should note that a large number of soldiers in the garrisons were from Goa. The civilians grouped themselves in what we would today call a ghetto in the area directly opposite the Fort down a street known as La Rapozeira, or Foxhole, which would appear to follow the line of the present day Njia Kuu. Their most substantial buildings were a Customs House, an Augustinian Monastery (one of seven originally dotted around the island) and the parish church of the *Misericordia* which was the centre for the *Fraternity of the Misericordia*, an organisation of the laity which provided care of widows, orphans and poor converts.

Thus, in the early seventeenth century things looked rosy in Mombasa's ecclesiastical garden until 1631 when tragedy struck. In 1600, the Portuguese



PORTUGUESE CHAPEL, MALINDI
Oldest Christian building in Kenya

had made the son of the King of Malindi the new King of Mombasa. Apparently he did not come up to Portuguese expectations as their puppet king and in 1614 he was murdered, apparently at the instigation of the Portuguese Governor. Seemingly as a gesture of reconciliation to the bereaved family, the King of Portugal ordered that the murdered King's son should be taken to Goa to be given the best education and training available with a view to his returning to Mombasa eventually to be a well accomplished monarch. He was baptised there and was known as Dom Jeronimo Chingulia. Having married a noble Portuguese lady, he was ready to return to Mombasa to take up his throne. He did so in 1627 and shortly afterwards wrote a letter of obedience to the Pope. A Swahili history of the period says of him : "He had been brought up among the Portuguese; he ate pork like them; he ruled in a most tyrannical manner; he compelled the people to eat pork, and was wicked, and an infidel". He seems to have been an unstable personality and to have had successive quarrels with the commanders of the Fort. He secretly reverted to Islam, a fact that came to light in 1631. Before the Portuguese commander, who had been informed of the situation, had time to act, Chingulia took matters into his own hands.

On August 15th, the Feast of the Assumption 1631, he visited the Fort on the pretext of paying a complimentary feastday visit to the commander whose

throat he promptly slit. There followed a general massacre of the Christian population who were given the choice of embracing Islam, as he had done, or death. It is not within the scope of this brief history of Christianity in East Africa to describe the massacre of the Mombasa martyrs. Further reading on the matter is referred to in the bibliography. For reasons which are not too clear, the cause for the canonisation of these Mombasa martyrs was never concluded, but there is no doubt that many died a heroic death in defence of their faith. It is difficult to quote reliable statistics, but it would seem that very few, about fifty, embraced Islam; three hundred died for their faith, and four hundred were sent to Mecca as slaves. In 1632 Chingulia himself fled and the Portuguese once more took possession of the island. But the massacre had sounded the death knell for Christianity in these parts.

The hatred and animosity which had existed all along between Arab and Christian had now been rekindled, never to die down again as long as the Portuguese remained. The hold which the latter had after the flight of Chingulia was tenuous to say the least, and the remainder of the seventeenth century saw nothing but the violence of attack and counter-attack, capture and re-capture. A further menace to the Portuguese arrived when the Omani Arabs attacked their settlements. The Imam of Muscat captured Mombasa from them in 1660, having as part of his fleet two captured Portuguese galleons. The Fort held out, however, and gradually the Portuguese took over again.

The beginning of the end came in 1696 when a force of three thousand Omani Arabs under the Imam Saif Bin Sultan, approaching the Fort from Kilindini *mlango*, and not head-on from the sea, laid siege to it – a siege that was to last for thirty three months. At one point during the siege, reinforcements arrived from Goa, but they brought plague with them. This was as devastating as the occasional Arab attacks. By early December 1698 only the commander, eight Portuguese soldiers, three Indians, two African women and an African boy remained alive inside the Fort. The walls of the San Mateus bastion were scaled on the night of December 12th, but the gallant little group held out until the next morning. The commander was killed and the remainder surrendered. That was the end of Portuguese power in this part of the world. With a dying gasp they recaptured the Fort for a brief period in 1728-29, and then the gasp turned into a death rattle. Their power was replaced by that of the Omani Arabs who set up *Walis* or Governors in the settlements up and down the Coast. The first Wali of Mombasa was Nasir bin



RUINS OF OUR LADY OF GOOD HOPE CHAPEL

One of seven chapels in Mombasa belonging to the Portuguese period

Abdulla of the powerful Mazrui family which consolidated the Arab hold on the island of Zanzibar and the coastal mainland until the arrival of the British. Their first contact with Mombasa was in 1824 when they declared a short-lived (until 1826) Protectorate of Mombasa and flew the Union Jack over the Fort.

Needless to say this period of violence and counter violence between the Portuguese and Arabs ever since 1631 did not augur well for the spread, nor indeed for the survival of Christianity. As a religion it was associated with the foreign oppressor and by that very fact alone, leaving aside clashing beliefs, not welcome. When the Portuguese disappeared from the scene, so also did Christianity. Apart from that, the Augustinian clergy that came along with the Portuguese could hardly be called missionary priests. There is no evidence of their trying to leave the settlements; they were not “bush whackers”; they ministered to the Portuguese soldiers and civilians and their converts were those who came to them – in many cases probably soldiers, many of the garrison being locals, servants and so on. It is useless trying to surmise what might have happened if the Mombasa massacre had not taken place. Here we cannot play the “what if?” game. We have to wait till the middle of the nineteenth century to witness the next stirrings of Christian life beginning with the shores of Zanzibar.



FORT JESUS: 1596

MONUMENTS AND RUINS

Let us finish this chapter by seeing what vestiges there are at the Coast of the Portuguese Period. First and foremost, of course, is the formidable Fort they built overlooking the approach to Mombasa, and which they simply called Fort Jesus. It is the best preserved of all the Portuguese buildings, and one has only to visit it to see why. Building commenced in 1593 and was completed in 1596 by which time it presented an imposing sight to any would-be invaders. Its cannons peeping out through the emplacements in the immensely thick walls commanded the whole of the approach to Mombasa across the Creek to present day English Point. It is today Mombasa's main tourist attraction. If you follow the coastline south from the Fort, you will come across two Portuguese ruins. The first is the Fort of St Joseph situated on the cliffs opposite the lighthouse. Part of the wall facing the ocean is still quite intact with its slits for the cannons. The French saying that "The more things change, the more they remain the same" is borne out by the fact that right alongside the Fort are the gun emplacements built by the British during the Second World War to safeguard Mombasa from enemy warships and submarines.

Continuing further along the coast one meets the ruins of one of the seven original chapels of the Portuguese Augustinian priests. This was the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Hope; all that remains of it are three or four heaps of masonry. Finally, here and there in the area around Njia Kuu and Mbarak

Hinawy Roads there are signs of solid coral foundations which could easily have been those of original Portuguese buildings. The only other Portuguese monuments surviving are in Malindi. The more famous of these is the Vasco da Gama Pillar situated on a small promontory going southwards from the town. This was erected — on a different site however, — by Vasco da Gama on his return journey from Goa in 1498-99. It has a small cross on the top with the King of Portugal's Coat of Arms etched on it. Nearer the town along the coast road there is the Portuguese Chapel. Mark Horton of Cambridge University wrote a report on it as part of a study for the National Museums of Kenya. He dates it between 1508 and 1512, which "... probably makes it the earliest Portuguese building surviving in East and Southern Africa". Until quite recently, Mass was offered in this little chapel twice yearly, on April 7th, the date of St Francis Xavier's arrival in Malindi, and December 3rd, his feastday. All these monuments and ruins are now in the care of the National Museums of Kenya.

SOURCES:

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3. Freeman-Grenville, Dr. G., *Islam and Christianity in East Africa; in "African Ecclesiastical Review", July 1960.*
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PART II

THE MODERN MISSIONARY PERIOD

CHAPTER II

Zanzibar

Describing the growth of the missionary Church in East Africa, Cardinal Hinsley said: "Here is the human element lifted to the level of the superhuman, and supported by the supernatural. God's Providence is over all, and God's grace rules every gain". In 1860, Monsignor Armand Maupont, Bishop of the Diocese of St. Denis on the island of Reunion in the southern waters of the Indian Ocean, which was entrusted to the Holy Ghost Fathers, was to spearhead the missionary movement northwards to the island of Zanzibar off the East Coast of Africa. At this time Zanzibar (Zanguebar as it was then known) was a sovereign state ruled by an independent Arab Sultan, Said Majid. The Sultan was both civil and religious ruler whose authority extended far into the mainland. There was a saying at the time : "When the drums beat in Zanzibar, they are heard at the Great Lakes". Zanzibar as well as Bagamoyo, and to a lesser extent, Mombasa further north, was the end of the road for the notorious slave caravans from the interior.

News of the dreadful condition of the poor, emaciated and half-dead slaves who somehow managed to survive the dreadful journey reached Reunion. Monsignor Maupont decided he must do something to help them. He sent his Vicar General, Fr Armand Fava, to investigate the situation in Zanzibar with a view to opening a mission there. Fr Fava was a diocesan priest, who, along with other priests of the time destined to work in the French colonies, had followed his studies for the priesthood at the Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris. Fr Fava arrived in Zanzibar on Christmas Eve, 1860 accompanied by two other diocesan priests, six Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary (a congregation founded in Reunion by Fr Le Vavas seur CSSp) and a naval doctor. The only Catholics to be found, at quick notice at least, were five Goans. Fr Fava celebrated Midnight Mass with this little flock, setting in motion a missionary movement which over the years was to take on major proportions resulting in the flourishing Church of present day East Africa.

In spite of the spirit of anticlericalism which was rife in France, Fr Fava was fortunate in finding a friendly French Consul on the island as well as a commander of a small French fleet and a number of French nationals, all of whom welcomed his arrival. He was formally introduced to the Sultan by the French Consul. Fr Fava relates how on this occasion the young Said Majid accorded the small group of missionaries a most "...cordial and assiduous welcome". The Sultan further assured them that his house and land were theirs and that they were to feel free to use them as if they were his brothers. With such backing from high places, Fr Fava found no difficulty in buying

land. He bought a large plot for the central mission, so large, indeed that the British Consul reported to London that he was afraid the French were in reality building a military base for a French take-over of the island! Their fears could be justified by the fact that the Fathers flew the French flag over the mission and that the doctor wore the uniform of the French Navy! The main mission was called Providence. As well as this a pleasant plot by the sea was bought for the Sisters' convent and hospital and shortly afterwards a plot for a Catholic cemetery. Money was no problem. The French Government in Reunion allocated 15,000 francs to put the project on its feet with an assurance of more to come; a grant of 20,000 francs came from the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome; donations came in large quantities from "...wealthy friends in France who are interested in our work".

From the beginning the missionaries' apostolate was directed to the slaves. They went along to the slave market (today the Anglican Cathedral stands on the spot) and "redeemed" or "bought back" the remnant of the slaves regarded as useless by the rich Arab slave traders from the Persian Gulf. These were the old and feeble, and young children. The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith kept sending money each year for the emancipation of slaves even after the slave trade had been wiped out! We can only presume that the later missionaries used the money for the redemption of "spiritual slaves". The redeemed slaves were taken to the mission or the convent after being treated at the hospital. Then they were instructed and eventually baptised. Among the first names in the Zanzibar baptismal register is that of Murphy. Bishop John Neville CSSp suggests that this little "dark chap from Central Africa" had as godfather an Irishman on the staff of the American Consulate. As they grew up the boys were taught useful trades. In time they became masons, carpenters, smiths and farmers. The girls were taught the domestic sciences by the Sisters. The boys and girls became men and women, married and started the first Catholic families in this part of the world.

We have gone ahead of ourselves chronologically here but let us at this point say more about these Catholic families. It was around them that the idea of the Christian village grew. This was the brainchild of Fr Horner who, in 1868, opened the great mission of Bagamoyo on the mainland opposite Zanzibar, which was to become the pattern of all future new missions opened by the Holy Ghost Fathers. A large establishment for boys and another for girls was constructed by the Fathers and Brothers who had by now arrived.

Helping the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters were lay volunteers from Reunion who came as teachers and instructors. At one time there were four hundred boys and girls at Bagamoyo – the source of a new life for these heretofore unfortunates; a life built on the Catholic sacramental life and virtues. A new breed of Christian parents had their own home within the safety of the mission compound; their children would play around the doorway in full security, and all would live in peace without fear of the whip, chains, or overloaded slave dhows. As the Church expanded and new missions were opened, a group of Catholics (called Children of the Mission) was brought from Bagamoyo to form the nucleus of the new community. In actual fact this may not have been the best policy since these foreigners were not always accepted in their new surroundings. In Giriama they were known as *Wanyamwezi* and in Bura as *Wajomba*; they kept apart to themselves and were always somewhat of a question mark to the new local Christians. Be that as it may, the policy was a child of its time and it is all too easy for us to be critical in hindsight.

Let us return to Zanzibar. In 1862 Rome recognised Monsignor Maupont's missionary enterprise and named him Prefect Apostolic of Zanzibar. His boundaries were: to the north, Cape Guardafui in present day Republic of Somalia; to the south, Cape Delgado in Mozambique – a distance of some 1300 miles; to the east, the Indian Ocean; to the west, no limit!

THE FIRST HOLY GHOST FATHERS: 1863

In 1863 Fr Fava returned to Reunion along with his two pioneering companions. Fr Fava continued home to France where he became Bishop of Grenoble. Who can estimate the value of the trojan work he did in Zanzibar? His letters to Monsignor Maupont show clearly that, like St Paul, the love of Christ urged him on and on tirelessly. The diocesan priests were replaced by four Holy Ghost missionaries: Fr Anthony Horner, who was appointed Pro-Prefect Apostolic, and his assistant Fr Etienne Baur, along with Brothers Celestine and Felician. Zanzibar continued until 1872 under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of St Denis. The connection with Reunion was severed that year, and the mission was confided to the Holy Ghost Fathers with Fr Horner becoming a fully fledged Prefect Apostolic. The mission went on developing during Fr Horner's time until his death in 1883. By this time the Holy See, encouraged by the enthusiastic reports sent from the island every year,

considered that the time had come for the Prefecture to become a Vicariate. Monsignor Raoul de Courmont was appointed its first Vicar Apostolic. By a happy turn of events, in December 1883 he was consecrated Bishop in Paris by none other than Monsignor Fava, now Bishop of Grenoble, who had been the first missionary to Zanzibar.

By now, the Catholic Mission of Providence was established and well accepted by one and all on the island. Already in Fr Fava's time, a glowing account of the mission appeared in *The Religious Almanac of the Diocese of St Denis*. The article praises the "worthy ecclesiastics" and "the good Sisters" for their work – a hospital, a hospice for the poor, workshops – and for having made the name of France respected by all: "...our mother country does not conquer far off lands only by the force of arms; she also knows how to make more durable conquests by the power of example and the word of the Gospel". The hospital became famous among the European population for its openness to all, mainly sailors, and on one occasion to some Protestant missionaries. The Sisters' devotion to the poor was singled out as well as their efforts to enhance the lot of women among the local population. Their school, under the patronage of the Holy Family, "in memory of the Flight into Egypt, an African country" was also open to all. Catechism was taught to the redeemed slaves, but apart from that, children from any race were invited to come and learn French, mathematics and a trade. The children of Indian origin are singled out as being "...intelligent, happy, studious and at home in our company". Some of these children from Hindu and Arab backgrounds stayed on in the mission compound after classes and asked questions about Christianity. "They return home in the evening and tell their parents what they have heard. In this way Christianity is like a light among the people ... let us pray that the Holy Spirit will spread this light in East Africa until it is no longer plunged in darkness". In our next chapter which will deal with Mombasa, we shall see the high regard the British officials on the island had for the Catholic Mission.

It was during this time of consolidation under Fr Horner that the Holy Ghost Fathers opened up Bagamoyo Mission (on a plot already bought by the far-seeing Fr Fava) and from there headed inland. Bagamoyo was followed by Mhonda, Mondhera and Morogoro. Later on came Ilonga and Kilimanjaro (Kilema) ... but as the development of what was German East Africa (present day Tanzania) is not within the scope of this work we must leave it there and return once again to Zanzibar.

ARRIVAL OF OTHER MISSIONARY GROUPS AND DIVISIONS OF THE VICARIATE

Monsignor de Courmont took over his Vicariate at a time of great political ferment which created great difficulties for him. The infamous Scramble for Africa was on. Africa, which for centuries had, in Western eyes, slumbered and slept, unknown and unexplored, a land of fable and myth, awoke in the 17th and 18th centuries, like Wordsworth's "mighty being", and emerged from its darkness into the full glare of Western greed. The time with which we are dealing with was the age of the great European explorers whose accounts of their discoveries whetted the appetites of their governments who rushed in to claim their share of the spoils. The vast territories under the sway of the Sultan of Zanzibar were cut up at the Berlin Conference (1885) and the Convention of London (1886) and divided between the rival powers. From Cape Guardafui to the Juba River became Italian; from the Juba to Tanga became British; from Tanga to Cape Delgado became German. At first they were euphemistically called spheres of influence, later on British East Africa etc.

Monsignor de Courmont now found himself with a jurisdiction civilly governed by three distinct European powers, each with its own distinct government, language, ways, traditions, religions, interests and, yes, traditional antagonisms, while he and his fellow missionaries differed in nationality and language, from each of them. For him there was only one solution – divide the vicariate into distinct ecclesiastical divisions corresponding to the civil ones, each with its own Vicar Apostolic. He presented this solution to Rome but did not see its realisation himself. Worn out by bad health – partly due to long foot safaris on the mainland including one to Kilimanjaro and another to Kikuyuland – he resigned in 1870, and handed over to his successor, Monsignor Emile Allegeyer, who oversaw the division of the huge Vicariate. Monsignor Allegeyer had been a junior scholastic in Blackrock College, Dublin, and later became a member of the Irish Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers. After his apostolic consecration, he spent fifteen years in Trinidad.

In fact the Vicariate had already seen some minor divisions. In 1880, the Vicariates of Tanganyika and Victoria Nyanza (Uganda) had been detached and handed over to the recently founded White Fathers. In 1887 the southern part of the Vicariate had been given to the Bavarian Benedictines and called

the Vicariate of Dar-es-Salaam. In 1905 what remained in German East Africa became the Vicariate of Bagamoyo, and Italian Somaliland was handed over to the Italian Trinitarians. In 1897 the portion of British East Africa bordering Lake Victoria was entrusted to the Mill Hill Fathers as the Vicariate Apostolic of the Upper Nile, later becoming that of Kisumu. The year 1902 saw a further division around Mount Kenya, which became the Vicariate of Nyeri in 1905, entrusted to the Italian Consolata Fathers.

In spite of these sub-divisions what remained of the original vicariate was no mean heritage. The new Vicariate Apostolic of Zanzibar embraced the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, and on the mainland it was bounded on the north by the Juba River and a line drawn from Bardera to Lake Rudolf; on the south it was bordered by German East Africa; on the west and northwest by the Vicariate of the Upper Nile, and on the east by the Indian Ocean. The following statistics are given for this area in 1905: 53 Priests; 45 Brothers; 65 Sisters; 130 Catechists; 14,000 Catholics; 29 Churches (stations); conversions – 927. In 1932 the then Vicar Apostolic, Bishop John W. Heffernan CSSp, changed the Vicariate headquarters from Zanzibar to Nairobi.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HIERARCHY – THE END OF THE VICARIATE OF ZANZIBAR

In 1953, the Hierarchy was established in what was now Kenya, and the Vicariate of Zanzibar ceased to exist. The jurisdiction was now divided into the Archdiocese of Nairobi and the Dioceses of Kisumu, Nyeri and Meru. The islands of Zanzibar and Pemba were part of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. A further division came in 1955 when the Diocese of Mombasa and Zanzibar was erected consisting of The Coast Province of Kenya and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Its first Bishop, Very Reverend Bishop Eugene Butler CSSp, was consecrated in 1957.

Finally, the last partition took place in 1963. In that year, Zanzibar, which had been attached administratively to Kenya, now gained its independence at the same time as the latter, and in the following year it federated with the Republic of Tanganyika to form the United Republic of Tanzania. The situation could not continue with the islands ecclesiastically administered by a bishop resident in Kenya. In 1963, the two islands were erected as an Administration Apostolic. The Holy Ghost Fathers who had worked there for

over a century returned to Kenya. From 1964-1966 the Archbishop of Dar-es-Salaam acted as Apostolic Administrator; Fr Sipendi followed in 1966 and he handed over to Bishop Mkoba of Morogoro when he was promoted to the See of Moshi. In 1973 Fr Bernard Ngaviliau CSSp was appointed Administrator, thus resuming the long tradition of Spiritan presence in Zanzibar. The Administration Apostolic became a diocese in 1980 with Bishop Ngaviliau as its first Bishop. The little diocese has only two parishes, Zanzibar and Wete (on Pemba). The Bishop is assisted by two diocesan priests and four Sisters, and ministers to a Catholic population of a mere 3,500.

SOURCES:

1. *Almanac of the Diocese of St Denis, Reunion, 1863-1873.*
2. de Courmont, Monsignor Raoul CSSp, *Correspondence*, Archives, Chevilly, France.
3. Neville, V. Reverend Bishop John, *The Story of the Faith in East Africa in The Missionary Annals*, Dublin 1934.

CHAPTER III

Failure on the Tana River

The First Ill-fated Attempt
on the Mainland

As Bagamoyo had become the Mother-Mission of that part of the East African known as German East Africa, so also Mombasa was to become its counterpart in corresponding British East Africa. Mombasa, however, although the site of earlier exploratory visits from Zanzibar, beginning in 1885, was not the first mainland mission. The story of the first mission brings us far inland along the Tana River. It is a sad story – a story of failure, a story of death. Immediate failure? Yes; Ultimate failure? Who knows? Was the failure and death of its two pioneers the price to be paid for the future of the Kenya Mission?

Before the advent of the railways and motorways the most universally used means of access to the interior of Africa had always been the rivers – Nile, Niger, Congo, Zambezi. Here in British East Africa, the Government looked to *their* great waterway, the Tana River, as the way to opening up the country. Their intention was to follow the river from Kipini on the coast well into the heart of Kikuyuland where it has its source at the foot of Mount Meru near present day Embu Town. They had opened posts at strategic points along the river from where they hoped to branch out further. It was only natural, then, that missionaries wishing to penetrate inland would also use the same route and outposts as their bases. Protestants had already established themselves at these posts, and had begun claiming spiritual spheres of influence. We shall see more about these Protestant missions later on.

The two most prominent tribes along the banks of that part of the Tana with which we are concerned were the Wagalla, who predominated at the time we are writing about, and the Wapokomo, the present sole occupants. The Wagalla were a warlike tribe originating from Ethiopia who came as conquerors restricting the Wapokomo people to the banks of the river while they penetrated into the lands of the Wakamba and the Wakikuyu. However, being slowly defeated by these two powerful tribes on the one hand, and being harassed by the Maasai and the Somalis on the other, they were eventually driven back to the Coast where they are found today, keeping a mere remnant of their one time power. They have no land of their own and spend their lives moving from place to place with their cattle. With the wane of Wagalla power, the Wapokomo people were able to settle down to a peaceful way of life. They live in villages along the banks of the river, travelling by means of canoes or small motorboats, or by footpaths which follow zigzag patterns from village to village.

THE PIONEERS

The story of the first Catholic attempt at evangelising this area opens in 1887 when Monsignor de Courmont, Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar, along with Fr Alexander Le Roy, a veritable giant among the early missionaries, made an exploratory visit to Lamu, at that time part of the Sultanate of Zanzibar. Monsignor de Courmont hoped to get a *pied à terre* on the island for future expeditions onto the mainland. After their reconnaissance on and around Lamu, they returned to Zanzibar exploring, on their way, the possibilities of founding a mission along the banks of the Sabaki River, near Malindi.

Two years later they were ready to launch their first expedition to the Tana. On November 2nd 1889, Monsignor de Courmont, Fr Le Roy, Fr Charles Gommenginger and Brother Acheul Dreyer, along with ten neophytes from Bagamoyo Mission, set out from Zanzibar in the mission launch, the *St Joseph*, which had been donated to the Fathers by a generous Indian in recognition of the services rendered by the mission to the people of Bagamoyo. We referred to such neophytes from Bagamoyo in the last chapter. They were somewhat naively called Children of the Mission and were meant to be a nucleus for Christian families in new missions. There were two crew members – Hamisi, the captain, and Suleman, the cook – both staunch Muslims. They arrived safely in Lamu having made stops at Mombasa, Kilifi, Malindi and Shela. Their search for a permanent residence was quickly rewarded. “Through the kindness of Providence”, writes Le Roy, “a former Methodist missionary, a native of Sierra Leone, Mr During by name, having become disenchanted with his own church and having left the ministry, offered his house to the Catholic missionaries. Le Roy calls the purchase of the house “the first success of the mission”. They were also welcomed by Mr Kurt Toeppen, Director of the German Consular Agency which administered the German Protectorate of Witu, a Sultanate in its own right further inland along the Tana.

The *St Joseph* set off for Kipini at the mouth of the Tana on November 27th. Along with the missionaries were Mr Toeppen and a fellow German, a biologist, whose purpose in making the journey was to acquire crocodile eggs; a Protestant, a Jew and several Muslims. What a motley group! Le Roy sums up the Catholic contingent thus: “One bishop, two priests, one brother, eleven faithful – the whole hierarchy except the Pope”. The *St Joseph* was unable to manœuvre the mouth of the river which formed a delta. Mr

Toeppen had been promised canoes and porters, but as neither materialised the group had to do the best they could and set out for Kau on foot. On arrival here it was decided that Fr Gommenginger should remain behind with a few of the Christians while the others would proceed further upstream. A recurrent theme keeps coming up in Fr Le Roy's notes: "Mosquitoes...mosquitoes...and more mosquitoes". He says of the Tana: "...and so it rolls on, century after century...silently...We are the first missionaries sent by the Catholic Church to the unknown people living along its banks...Oh God, grant us success, since this venture is yours, and it is to speak of you that we have come here".

FOUNDATION OF MISSION AT KOZI

Monsignor de Courmont, Fr Le Roy, Brother Acheul and their small band of Christians reached Mrambani on December 4th. They were well received by the local chief, Kombo, who had originally come from Ndera further up the river along with a group of co-villagers to settle at Mrambani. They were visited each year by "a great witchdoctor from Ndera" who would conduct special prayers and rites for their harvest. Kombo suggested that the missionaries accompany this most unlikely of guides for a Christian expedition looking for a mission site back to Ndera. "And so", Le Roy tells us, "Behold the old Babya, the devil's witchdoctor, introducing Monsignor de Courmont, the Good God's High Priest to the countryside of Ndera". They were provided with sufficient canoes and porters for the journey. They passed the already well established Methodist Mission at Golbanti (which had been founded by none other than the Reverend During we mentioned earlier as having sold his house in Lamu to the Catholic missionaries), and that at Ngao (which at the time belonged to the German Neukirchen group). They were accorded a warm welcome and a *bon voyage* at both places. They finally reached Ndera on December 14 and were given a site at Kozi, the principal village in the region, consisting of between 150 and 200 houses. After a few days, Monsignor de Courmont and Fr Le Roy headed once again up-river accompanied by one of the Christians, leaving Brother Acheul and the others behind "to maintain good relations". They reached Malalulu, 350 miles from Kipini, on Christmas Eve, where they offered Midnight Mass. "...on the outskirts of Malalulu, in this lost country, on this mysterious river, in the midst of an unknown people – it is here we find ourselves, a bishop, a priest

and a Christian, the first and only representatives of Christianity”.

Having reached the further point of their journey up-stream, they started the long and tedious journey back to Kipini, Lamu and Zanzibar. On returning to Kozi, Monsignor de Courmont officially founded the Catholic Mission of St Joseph of Ndera on December 30th 1889. Carried away by the solemnity of the occasion, Fr Le Roy wrote as follows in his diary for January 1st 1890: “The dawn of 1890. Happy New Year. Happy New Year to our missionaries and priests. To France. To the Catholic Church. To Christian lands. To pagan lands. This was Monsignor’s intention at Mass today. After Mass Suleman served us his menu: a cup of black coffee and a roasted banana”. Leaving Brother Acheul and his band of Christians behind, de Courmont and Le Roy set off again, reaching Kau on January 4th. Here they found Fr Gommenginger in good health, and after a brief reunion the two groups headed off their different ways – de Courmont and Le Roy down-stream, and Fr Gommenginger and his Christians up-stream to join Brother Acheul at Kozi.

DISASTER AND CLOSURE OF THE MISSION

The rest of Fr Le Roy’s diary relates to the rest of the journey back to Zanzibar and no further mention is made of Kozi. Fr Gommenginger and Brother Acheul started their mission work following the pattern set by Bagamoyo – first a building programme, then catechesis. But any small progress made was shortlived. In July Brother Acheul arrived in Zanzibar with the traumatic news that as a result of unusually heavy long rains the Tana had overflowed its banks destroying all the mission buildings as well as the village houses. Nothing was left. Fr Gommenginger had constructed a “nest” in one tree and Brother Acheul one in another – and here they were living. “All is lost”, reported the Brother. On top of that everyone in the group was suffering from one disease or another, and Fr Gommenginger particularly was far from well.

Coinciding with the devastation wrought along the banks of the Tana came the decision of the government to abandon their posts there. It had been decided to build a railway from Mombasa to Uganda, and this was to become the principal means of penetration into the interior. What with the poor health of the missionaries, the devastation of the mission and the decision of the government to abandon the Tana, Monsignor de Courmont had no alternative but to close

down the mission and withdraw. Brother Acheul made his way back to Kozi with the sad but inevitable news. He found the little group all sick to a man. Fr Gommenginger had become so ill that he thought he was going to die.

DEATHS OF THE PIONEERS

They started the painful journey back to Lamu without having had a single baptism to record. On the way Brother Acheul sent word to Zanzibar about the deteriorating condition of Fr Gommenginger. He quoted him as saying: "Do not bury me in this unchristian land. Put me in a canoe and bury me in a sandy grave at Kipini". Among those who received this news was Fr Gommenginger's brother, Auguste, who had just returned from an expedition to Kilimanjaro along with the intrepid pair, de Courmont and Le Roy. On reception of the news, Le Roy hastened to meet the group at Lamu. He met them there, a pitiful sight everyone of them. Fr Gommenginger was but a shadow of his former self so wasted was he. They left Lamu for Zanzibar on October 25th on board the British mailship, the *Ethiopia*. The journey was a dreadful one for Fr Gommenginger, and after a long agony during which he repeatedly offered his life for Africa, he died at 1.00 a.m. on October 31st as the ship approached Zanzibar. It was just two days short of a year since he had set out for the Tana. He was only 49 years of age. He was buried that evening in the mission cemetery – the first Holy Ghost Father to be associated with present day Kenya to give his life for those who would "reap in joy". Brother Acheul's health continued to deteriorate to the extent that there was no hope of recovery. He died on January 6th 1891 and was laid to rest beside his friend and fellow pioneer of the Tana River Mission. As for Kozi, it no longer exists. Periodic floods eventually forced the people to found a new village at Kitere across the river, and there was no more association with the Catholic Church along the Tana for over 60 years.

SOURCES

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Journal of the Tana River Mission.
Notes made by Fr E. Ryan CSSp from above.
Holy Ghost Fathers' Archives, Chevilly, France.
Journal of Mombasa Mission.

CHAPTER IV

Mombasa's Mother Churches

1. Mombasa
2. Bura
3. Giriama

*"Mombasa – a Queen indeed, and beautiful, withal,
despite the blood feuds of yesteryear, in defiance
of a chequered history of slavery and rapine and
black death and destruction. A Queen, verily,
whose realm is commerce, and whose home is a
coral palace at the gateway to Kenya".*

(Allister MacMillan)

"Mombasa – The Friendly Town"

(John H. Jewel)

Mombasa in the 1880's was no stranger to the Holy Ghost missionaries who established their spiritual sphere of influence throughout the Vicariate of Zanzibar in what corresponded to German East Africa. Their principal mainland missions there were Bagamoyo and Morogoro from which the Gospel spread inland. As we have seen, they now turned their eyes further north to British East Africa. As pointed out in the last chapter, their original intention was to use the Tana River as the means to penetrate the interior with Lamu as their *pied à terre*, just off the Coast. Mombasa, of course, with its large harbour and strategic coastal position, along with its rise to power as "the second part of Zanzibar", as one writer put it, also presented itself as an obvious site for a mission.

The first tentative step towards establishing a mission at Mombasa was taken by Monsignor de Courmont who sent Fr Alexander Le Roy there on an exploratory expedition in 1885. He was further spurred on to more concrete action the following year when the Commission of Delineation in London drew the definitive lines between British and German East Africa. De Courmont wrote to his Superior General informing him that Bismarck, the German Prime Minister, would not have Jesuits or Frenchmen in German ruled territory. He therefore suggested that a German Vicar Apostolic be appointed for Southern Zanzibar with his headquarters at Bagamoyo, and that he himself should continue as Vicar for Northern Zanzibar with his headquarters on the island. In further correspondence he often spoke of Mombasa as a refuge for French Holy Ghost Fathers likely to be expelled from German East Africa. He decided to see Mombasa for himself and in 1887 took it in as part of a round trip to Bagamoyo, Mombasa and Lamu. De Courmont's interest in starting a mission in Mombasa got a further boost in the form of a letter from Colonel C.B. Euan Smith, British Consul and Agent for the Imperial (British) East Africa Company in Zanzibar. Writing to George McKinnon, Managing Director of the company in Mombasa. Euan Smith recommended that every assistance possible be given to the "French Fathers" who wished to open "a branch of their Zanzibar hospital that has been productive of such great and extended good". He lavished praise on the missionaries: "I recommend this project to your hearty good will and practical support with the utmost confidence... The tact, wisdom and practical good sense which have always characterised the administration of the French Mission; the care taken by them to keep absolutely aloof from politics or political entanglement of any description; the excellent and cordial

relations which they never fail to establish and maintain with all classes of the native community; the real practical good which has always resulted from their labours – all these considerations render it, in my opinion, certain that the I.B.E.A. Company and the native communities now committed to their charge cannot fail to reap the greatest present and future benefit by the establishment in their midst of this mission whose efforts hitherto have met with so signal and so well merited success”.

Unmoved by this outpouring of lavish praise for the proposed project, McKinnon replied that the I.B.E.A. Company intended establishing its own hospital in Mombasa for their employees. Unperturbed, de Courmont thereupon suggested that he provide Sisters as nurses to assist the Company’s doctors. Having used the thin end of the wedge, de Courmont then went on to say that he could also provide a church or a chapel and a “...little school which would be appreciated by the Company’s employees”. He mentions the Goans working for the company in Mombasa, pointing out that the Goan population in Zanzibar had increased from less than ten in 1860 to between three to four hundred in the eighties – precisely because they knew of the presence of a Catholic Church and school there. He ends his letter with tongue in cheek by saying that he would have no objection to building up a Catholic community “...as we have done at Bagamoyo and elsewhere”.

The last piece of correspondence bearing on this issue is de Courmont’s letter to Euan Smith in which he expresses his gratitude for all the cooperation received from the Company, especially from Mr. Mackenzie who “...with his habitual benevolence and courtesy has expressed his satisfaction with the French missionaries” and who “...has encouraged my future projects”. From all this it would seem that part of the curriculum of studies at the Holy Ghost Fathers’ Mother House was a course in diplomacy!

In another letter from de Courmont’s ever flowing pen, this time to Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, Rome, we learn that in fact, de Courmont had already bought some land in Mombasa from a wealthy Baniani (Hindu businessman) who had some property at the Coast which he wanted to sell along with the option of a house in Malindi “...which I intend to have occupied in order to have a *piéd à terre* in these parts”. We learn with great interest that: “...Baruku, who is chief of all the countryside around Mombasa and the formidable rival of Said Bargash, would be pleased to welcome us and asks for us... he says that if we presented ourselves to him we would be made welcome”.

FOUNDATION OF MOMBASA CATHOLIC MISSION

Armed with such formidable support from Protestant British, Muslim Arab and Hindu Baniani, de Courmont was ready for Mombasa. The year 1889 saw the beginnings of Mombasa's first Catholic Mission in the town. It began with the driving force of one of the greatest Holy Ghost missionaries of both East and West Africa – Fr Alexander Le Roy. His first appointment as missionary was to Reunion, and from there he came to Zanzibar and then on to Mombasa. He was a man of tremendous energy, zeal and ability, a great traveller and prolific writer from whose pen flowed a continuous stream of articles and books on a wide variety of subjects including ecology, zoology and anthropology. He was outspoken in his disagreement with the German system of administration, so much so that pressure was brought on his Superior General to have him eventually withdrawn from East Africa. He was consecrated Bishop of the Two Guineas in West Africa, in 1892, and four years later was elected Superior General – a post which he held for thirty years and to which he brought a wealth of missionary experience.

In June 1889 Fr Le Roy came to Mombasa and stayed for five months, making as his base the home of a Mr Nurubhoy Adamjee. He found about fifty Catholics in the town, mostly Goans, Malabars and Bangalores, employees of the I.B.E.A. Company. During his stay he travelled extensively on the lookout for possible future mission sites: Malindi, "...which seems to have a future", and where he bought two houses, both of which were later burnt down – by accident or intent we are not told; Jilore in the Sabaki River area where he bought a plot which he later claimed was "stolen" by a rival missionary group; Giriama; Kauma; Chonyi; Ribe; Rabai and Digo. Of the Digo he says: "...they are friendly but given to drinking too much *tembo*". It was during this period that the first baptism in Mombasa was recorded. On August 14th he baptised Maria, the infant daughter of Diego and Natalia Pereira – a couple who figure a lot in the later pages of the Mombasa Journal. In September, Le Roy also baptised a three year old Giriama boy who was dying, and christened him Alexander, presumably after himself. In October he returned to Zanzibar to give his report but was back in Mombasa again in November on his way with the ill-fated group of the Tana River pioneers.

In July of 1890 Mgr. Le Roy passed through Mombasa once again in the company of the indefatigable de Courmont, this time on their way to Kilimanjaro. Monsignor Le Roy offered Mass near the summit, and, having

a deep devotion to Our Lady, he consecrated to her the endless vista stretching out before him on all sides. This safari resulted in the establishment of the Mission of Kilema, where Fr Auguste Gommenginger (brother of Fr Charles of the Tana River) toiled for ten years without having a single baptism, but which today is the centre of the intensely Catholic Chagga land. He was very impressed with the Maasai and was ahead of his time in his ideas about a realistic approach to the question of their evangelisation.

After all this scouting around, Fr Le Roy finally came to settle in Mombasa in September 1891, accompanied by Brother Simplicien Dubat, to establish the mission. His devotion to Our Lady has already been noted, and in his journal he takes pains to point out that they left Zanzibar on September 8th, the Feast of Our Lady's Birthday, and arrived at Mombasa on September 12th, the Feast of her Holy Name. They took up residence in a house on Njia Kuu, bought from Mr Pereira whom we have already met, which had a little piece of land attached to it "...which could eventually become a garden". There is a story that he came disguised as an Ethiopian to allay fears of a Christian take over in the Old Town but there is no documentation to substantiate it. The first Mass was said the following day. Most of the Goans, hurriedly alerted, attended with great joy, and Le Roy notes in the *Journal*: "The Mission of Mombasa appears to have started". The first week was spent "...visiting the Catholics and local authorities, and we received a perfect welcome from all". Fr Le Roy, Brother Simplicien, and two Children of the Mission from Bagamoyo, Angelo and Marcel, set out getting the house into shape – no easy job as they soon discovered: "Our house is in a miserable state. To find a chapel and living quarters which would be more or less passable, everything must be remade, arranged or done away with – walls, doors, windows, rooms etc". While these renovations were going on Mass was offered in Pereira's house.

What was the Mombasa of Le Roy's time like? It was part of the Sultan of Zanzibar's Ten Mile Strip leased to the British and managed on their behalf (until 1895) by the I.B.E.A. Company. It was an almost completely Arab town. Apart from English Protestant missionaries of the Church Missionary Society and the employees of the Company, there were no other Europeans on the island. A number of Indian and Goan traders had shops and residences on Njia Kuu, such as Mr Pereira and a Mr M.R. do Souza whose grocery store became a meeting place for the Europeans and which became known as

the Club. The other inhabitants were Africans of various tribes, Swahilis and Baluchis (mercenaries employed by the Sultan to man Fort Jesus). We get the following account of Mombasa at the time in *A Guide to Mombasa and Surroundings* compiled for *The Mombasa Times* in 1890 by Charles Hobley.

“Mombasa was a curious place in those days. Its extent was very limited. There was a town wall. The Fort was garrisoned by about a hundred wild Hadramathis ...who were commanded by a venerable old Arab gentleman. Once outside the narrow lanes of the native town, no roads other than narrow footpaths existed; even the path leading to Kilindini was only about four foot wide and passed through jungle the whole way. It is wonderful how clearing and cultivation have in recent years well nigh abolished snakes from the island. The jungle was infested with puff adders and one invariably saw several in the course of an evening walk. Leopards roamed around the town at night snatching the odd goat here and there, and one morning the news came that one was asleep in the big fig tree at the southern extremity of the main street; it, however, vanished into the bush before we could get our rifles”.

We have the following description from Doctor Chanel, a Frenchman and friend of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Paris, who visited Mombasa in 1894 and left a vivid account of a foot safari from Mombasa to Kilimanjaro passing by Bura Mission. Of Mombasa he says: “...where the mission is situated, the only buildings worth the name are the mission itself and a mosque. The others are mud houses with *makuti* roofs, inhabited by Arabs, Indians and Swahilis. The alleyways between these houses become rivers during the rains, and the perfumes emanating from them are very varied and anything but fragrant. In the evening we go up on the roof of the mission house. From here a beautiful panorama unfolds itself before our eyes and we can see an arm of the sea bordered with greenery”. Chanel estimated the population of Mombasa at the time to be around one thousand people.

POOR MISSIONARY PROGRESS

Owing to the fact that Mombasa was an overwhelmingly Muslim town and, sad to say, owing to the hostility and opposition from other Christian missionaries, evangelisation and missionary progress were tediously slow at the beginning. By 1892 classes had started at the mission for the young Children of the Mission brought from Bagamoyo: “...in the morning half an

hour reading and writing; in the afternoon half an hour catechism; in the evening twenty minutes singing class". Already the Fathers were beginning to despair of any progress in the line of evangelisation, and Fr Flick who had replaced Fr Le Roy notes: "Apart from the Goans the only Catholics in Mombasa are those at the mission. Our principal aim now is to hold on to Mombasa Mission as a starting point for our missions at Bura and Kilimanjaro ... May God have mercy on us". Two years later things were no better as we read: "...the religious future of Mombasa has not yet taken on definitive form. The town is no less Muslim and the countryside around no less pagan. It is true that in the countryside there are quite a number of liberated slaves, but it is just as true that the most deep-seated attitude among them is the coldest indifference. In fact a chapel was built at Kilindini but when it was finished the most complete solitude reigned around it. Our Christians are mostly Goans, about forty, and come regularly enough to Sunday Mass. It is they also who look after the singing and never let us down when we need helpers for the more solemn feasts. It is very difficult for us to do any ministry in the town among the pagans as there are so many Arabs and slaves of Arabs. One could easily find in the interior people who would be only too glad to see the missionaries settling among them". These were obviously locals and not liberated slaves whose "coldest indifference" has been referred to above. We are told that Fr Machon in fact tried to start schools in the interior, that is on the mainland, but failed for lack of "...good members to put in charge", and the impossibility of visiting them frequently. "May God in his infinite mercy look with pity on these poor souls who, although so close to the coast, beg in vain for a Catholic mission for the past three years". Again, Fr Flick's vision of the role of Mombasa Mission is echoed: "For these reasons our principal function boils down to maintaining this post which is the point of entry for our stations at Kilimanjaro and Bura and which serves as a procure for them" .

THE DAWN OF HOPE BREAKS

The year 1897 was a turning point in the history of the hitherto unfortunate and somewhat miserable Mombasa Mission. Although the house in Njia Kuu had been enlarged by the purchase of the house next door, the Fathers realised that they would need a bigger plot eventually and so negotiations began with the Government. These dragged on and on and the *Journal* registers

frustration after frustration as obstacles arose, permissions withdrawn and so on until finally on November 17 we read: "Messrs Rogers, the local Consul and Head of Administration and Bradbridge have finally reached agreement about the concession of the land to be ceded to the mission". (The final signing of the papers, however, did not take place until January 1898 – Fr Sacleux signed for the mission.) The plot was five acres and was purchased for thirty pounds an acre. Different figures are given in different accounts but the ones quoted here seem to be the correct ones. Fr Ball, about whom we shall read more in connection with Giriama, started to clear the plot with the mission children; permission was obtained to open a quarry and blast the rocks; appeals were made for donations for a new church and work was speeded up day by day to get the building ready for Easter Sunday, 1898. As one gets nearer the entry for Easter Sunday, one is taken by the great sense of urgency: April 4th: "We shall have to work fast after Palm Sunday as it has been decided that the feast of Easter will be celebrated in the new church; 5th: At last the vault is beginning to stand out; 6th: Vault completed; 8th: Good Friday – scaffolding removed from the church. It looks really beautiful with the vault painted dark green and the walls white"; 9th: Holy Saturday – after the ceremonies in the old chapel we get back to work at a furious rate. The floor has to be levelled somewhat, install some seats, the altar etc. with only one day to go. By nightfall we had not succeeded in finishing everything, but we slept soundly.

"Easter Sunday was a triumph. Everybody up at an early hour – entry to church and altar decorated – 8.00 a.m. Mass (Solemn High) crowded; Gregorian Chant sung with vigour – Mass followed by Benediction (Solemn) and *Te Deum* and *Regina Coeli* – it all left a deep impression on the congregation. From Easter Sunday on things began to brighten up for the little flock at Mombasa. The *General Bulletin* of the Holy Ghost Fathers (published by the Mother House, Paris) for 1905 attributes the growth of the mission from now on to the fact that "...the Fathers are no longer hidden away as in the catacombs and are now attracting the natives. Our Goans who grow in numbers are very pleased with the change of locale (i.e. the chapel of Kilindini) and although they have a longer distance to travel, are faithful to the Sunday Mass, and a good number came back for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. We also have more confessions and communions".

This new church, situated no more than fifty or sixty yards from the site of the present cathedral, boasted of a gallery and a bell tower and seating

capacity of four hundred faithful. It became a printing press and bookshop after the present cathedral was consecrated in 1923 and remained such until the early nineteen seventies when it was demolished to make way for one of Mombasa's present landmarks – Ambalal House.

The Fathers, having built God's house, now decided they needed a house of their own that would be large enough to act as a *Procure* or base camp for the inland missions. The task was given to Frs Kuhn and Ball who together in a short space of time completed the house which still serves today as the Cathedral Presbytery. It was completed in 1900 with the addition of some facilities in 1901. Finally a fine convent was built facing present Nkrumah Road – it was later acquired by Baumann Company but was demolished to make way for Ambalal House. We shall come back to the Cathedral in a future chapter. As we leave it in the early years of the present century, we leave a Catholic community (according to the *General Bulletin*) of around 500 – "...mostly Goans, some Europeans and fifty Africans". Little enough to show for the toil and sweat, the frustrations and illnesses (fatigue was the greatest enemy) of those early Fathers and Brothers who gave their all without whom, God alone knows, what the Catholic Church in Mombasa would be like today.

BURA

It is commonly believed that Bura Catholic Mission was started from that of Kilema (broadly called Kilimanjaro in the early journals). This is not so – Bura was started *for* Kilema. Reference was made in the last chapter to the fact that Mombasa Mission had become a *Procure* or base camp for the Kilimanjaro missions. In order to bring building materials, furniture, church and house requisites to Kilema, large caravans had to be assembled at Mombasa. The porters for these caravans were to a great extent from Taita, and it was from these that the Fathers first learnt of Bura Valley. Le Roy writes in his Mombasa Journal on October 15th, 1891: "Today I sent a caravan of eighteen loads to Kilema. It is led by a man called Salim bin Mwinyi Tauma from Pangani". Here we may note that nearly all the caravan leaders were Muslims, originally from German East Africa and doubtless originally leaders of the slave and ivory caravans from the great Lakes. Le Roy continues: "He is accompanied by three Swahili in charge of sixteen Wataita from Bura. These Wataita describe their country as being well



Fathers at the Mombasa mission, early 1900s with some Children of the Mission, i.e. children from Christian villages.

populated and very beautiful and say that their chief, Bogoli, is very anxious to have a mission". It was almost a year later, however, before de Courmont made a move. He decided that a mission at Bura would serve as an excellent half-way-house for the caravans to Kilimanjaro. He appointed Fr Jean Maria Mevel as Superior with Fr Martin Rohmer and Brother Solanus Zipper as his assistants. However, before sending them to found the mission and committing himself, he and Fr Jean Flick, Fr Le Roy's successor at Mombasa



First Catholic Hospital in Kenya - opened by Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny - now Administration Block of Mombasa Hospital

and now on his way to work at Kilema, joined a caravan which arrived at Bura after eleven days of great suffering and hardship.

It might be well here to digress a little and quote from the diary of the French doctor Chanel referred to already. He and a companion trekked from Mombasa to Kilimanjaro in 1894 and he has left us an interesting account of the journey. The caravan was a modest one by current standards: Dr Chanel and his companion, a Mr Gautier; Swedi, the (Muslim) leader; Anthony and Noa, “boys” or African helpers; Horace Night, cook (one hopes that his meals were as exotic as his name); Rubini in charge of six *askaris* (soldiers) who were armed with Snider rifles; fifty-seven porters, each with a load of from sixty to seventy pounds weight. The need to reach watering holes each day determined the distance and speed of each day’s march. Their stopovers were as follows: Rabai (no one was allowed to leave the camp at night for fear of getting drunk on the local *tembo* which was in plentiful supply from the abundance of coconut palm trees in the area.); Samburu where they found that the Duruma people lived in little village clusters for fear of the Maasai marauders; Taru, “...where we got water without which we could not have reached Taita”; Maungu, their first contact with Taita; Ndara; Mwatate and finally: “...having crossed the Mwatate River, past the Bura *massif*, we entered a deep and narrow valley covered with banana plantations and fields of sugar cane and Angola peas; and at two o’clock in the afternoon of July 7th we arrived at the Catholic French Mission of Bura”. (Chanel tells us elsewhere that the Catholic Missions were always called French and the Protestant ones, British.) He says they received a marvellous welcome especially since they were the first Frenchmen to reach Bura apart from the Fathers. Chanel’s account goes on to describe his stay at Bura giving his impressions of the mission: a collection of four or five huts (the mission was still in its very early stages) with earthen floors and thatched roofs: a chapel with earthen floor and crumbling walls; the people, their customs and traditions; the important role of the *mganga* (witchdoctor) among them; their food and clothing; their system of government through elders; the importance of goats as their monetary unit and essential part in all sacrifice and divination rites; circumcision, dowry, marriage, divorce and polygamy; their burial rites. In a masterly literary fashion he follows the Wataita – from the cradle to the grave – interesting but beyond the scope of this work.

Let us return to our account of the first Fathers to reach Bura – Monsignor de Courmont and Fr Flick. They arrived on September 30th and immediately

were met by Bogoli who, apparently, was oozing charm. Within no time, Monsignor made his decision: “Bogoli’s good disposition,” writes Fr Flick, “the superb country, the considerable number of inhabitants, especially children, their desire to be instructed in religion... all these considerations determined Monsignor’s spirit”. Another factor which hastened his decision was the belief that the Reverend Wray of the Church Missionary Society, who had started a mission at Ndara but which had failed, was thinking of starting a mission in the Bura Valley, so de Courmont decided it was a matter of “...first come first served”. When he departed for Kilema, he left behind him Fr Flick to hold the fort awaiting the arrival of the official community of Frs Mevel, Rohmer and Brother Solanus. Before leaving for Kilema, de Courmont along with Fr Flick walked the land in the company of Bogoli and chose the sight for the mission – a spot near a mountain stream. “Monsignor is delighted”, records Fr Flick “especially because of the good water which Our Lady of Hope, to whom he dedicated the mission, has provided”.

THE MISSION TAKES SHAPE

Fr Flick began to get ready a small hut which Bogoli provided him with as his temporary living quarters – his “royal tent” as he called it. After his first night’s sleep there, however, he did not find it so royal: “I awoke to find the house full of huge lice who have found a new menu in white flesh and blood”. Bogoli left for Taveta for a few days, and Flick notes in his typical humourous style: “...he left me sole king and master of the land with fifty soldiers at my disposal”. At this point he began visiting the neighbouring villages. He found the people “timid and curious but not afraid; the men seem charming and promise to send their children for instruction”. He came across the trial of two sorcerers, Mzaza and Mhaya, whom the villagers wanted to kill but he managed to persuade them to await Bogoli’s return for his verdict.

The 15th October witnessed the first baptism in Bura – that of a little girl on the point of death whom he christened Ludovica. Nearly all the early baptisms were those of people – both adults and children – in a similar situation and most of them did die shortly after. A typical journal entry is the following: “I visit a very sick lady. I find her well disposed; I instruct her quickly, she asks for baptism ... that remedy which will assure her a place with God. I christen her Mary”. One of the adults who was baptised in this

way was Bogoli's first wife who died while he was away at Taveta visiting a sick brother. We are told that on his return he wept copiously for her.

Fr Flick ventured further afield and climbed the hills which form a necklace around Bura Valley – "Susu" from which he admired "the superb countryside...; Vuria which he describes as being "...in lovely country with plenty of people"; and the formidable Iyale which commands the end of the valley from which he got his first view of snow-capped Kilimanjaro and marvelled at the rich *mashamba* (gardens) of the people living at the foot of the hill. On his return journey to Mombasa, de Courmont called at Bura for a few days, and he and Fr Flick erected a large cross in the mission compound. They sang the *Te Deum*, *Ave Maris Stella*, *Memorare*, followed by Invocations to the Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Hope and St Joseph – a veritable marathon of prayers.

On December 18th everyone at the mission was terrified to hear the sound of gunfire. They thought it was the Germans who at that time were at war with the Maasai near Taveta. However, it was only a military fanfare heralding the approach of the caravan accompanying Fr Mevel and Brother Solanus. They were accompanied by a married man – and presumably his wife – as well as fifteen mission children from Bagamoyo who were meant to be the nucleus of the Bura Christian Village. Fr Rohmer did not arrive until some time after.

Fr Mevel took over from Fr Flick and paid his respects to Bogoli who provided him with the present of a goat – the paragon of animals among the Wataita. The boundaries of the mission plot were fixed definitively and Bogoli announced grandiosely that he was giving the land as a free gift. Later on he changed his mind and said it had to be paid for. He accepted a gift of a number of bales of calico cloth as payment, and no further reference to the matter is made in the early journals. Around the beginning of the new year, Fr Mevel began to get the impression that Bogoli was not as important as he had made himself out to be, and his references to him in the *Journal* become less and less complimentary. He calls him "...a great drinker of *tembo*; and has the following entry: "I call on Bogoli and find him in a profound sleep after a generous libation of *tembo*".

Brother Solanus' first task was to build the community house. The digging of the foundations was celebrated in fine style – goat, French wine, and *tembo*. Brother Solanus had succeeded in digging a canal from the nearby stream thus bringing water right into the mission compound. At the same time he built a temporary chapel – which Dr Chanel referred to above as

being in a miserable condition. The mission church proper did not start till later and it was not until September 30 1896 that the first Mass was offered there. The self same church still stands proudly today in the centre of Bura Mission, the oldest Catholic Church still in use in Kenya, although at the time of writing, plans are under way for the construction for a new and larger building.

DIFFICULTIES AND OPPOSITION

The evangelisation of the local people was for many years painfully slow and rather an on and off affair on account of periodic opposition from different quarters. The missionaries started their usual routine of school for the children brought from Bagamoyo and invited the locals to send their children for instruction. The daily timetable was: Daybreak: Mass and Rosary; 10.00: ablutions in the canal; 11.00: class; 1.30-3.00: class; the rest of the day was given to manual work at the buildings and in the garden, and to recreation. Great importance was given to singing classes and the *Journal* proudly announces that for Mass on New Year's day 1893: "The children sang the full Common of the Mass in Latin". By that same date ten local children (including one of Bogoli's) were attending instruction. This number was augmented by the arrival of a few Maasai boys newly baptised at Kilema sent to Bura to augment the attendance roll, no doubt. The lack of progress is borne out by the fact that when the first confirmations took place after six years, the new Vicar Apostolic, Monsignor Emile Allegeyer, had only thirty six candidates on whom to lay hands.

As mentioned already, evangelisation was very much an "on and off" affair owing to occasional demonstrations of opposition to the French Fathers. The people wavered at the slightest remarks derogatory towards the mission and its work. We read already in December 1892: "Mwalimu, the chief porter in a passing caravan tells the Wataita that the Whites have come to teach children, and that *they* are not children". This incident was followed by a drop in attendance at classes and prayers in common. Fr Flick however, adds a day later: "I persuade Mwalimu to head for Mombasa and I decide to go and hunt in Serengeti myself".

In July 1893 there was another crisis – suddenly the children from a neighbouring village stopped coming to the mission. "Mwakai, the nearest chief, has been jealous of Bogoli and the presents we gave him and has

forbidden his people to come to us". The crisis was shortlived, however, for after a visit from the Fathers to Mwakai, doubtless "bringing gifts" (as the Greeks did to Troy), an entry in the *Journal* joyfully relates: "...Mwakai has suddenly become our greatest friend".

An entry in 1896 tells us that: "Our Christians have lost their first fervour", although we can ask ourselves how deep that first fervour had ever been. Five years later the next crisis arose over a matter very dear to the hearts of the Wataita – the Fathers' efforts to suppress their traditional *ngoma* or dances, which the missionaries regarded as the incarnation of evil itself. These dances, of course, took place at night and left plenty to the imagination of the saintly Fathers. There was almost outright rebellion. The word filtered down the hills that the Protestant missionaries of the Church Missionary Society at Mbale and Chavia had allowed the dances to take place during the day in a desperate effort to hold on to their flock. Thereupon the Bura Fathers decided to follow suit "...so that the Protestant influence does not reach the Bura Valley and the surrounding hills. Moreover, our Christians threaten to leave us if they do not get this concession. Therefore the dances – and the disorders – are to recommence. Can we have any more conversions?... the answer is God's secret".

At this stage, the turn of the century, a catechumenate at Mgange Nyika is mentioned for the first time although the Fathers must have been working there for some time. We read: "The people of Mgange have turned against us and some of them have come to Bura to reclaim cattle they say were stolen by Fr Mevel. Fr Superior referred them to the District Commissioner at Taveta". Further on we read: "Our catechumens at Mgange have fallen to forty. The others say they would prefer to go to hell than to be baptised and have to give up their dances and their wives (in that order). They refuse to let their children come for instruction saying that if they themselves are going to hell their children should go there along with them. However, we hope in God's grace. At Mkaroro they agree that children receive instruction on condition that no mention be made of baptism".

PRESENT DESPAIR – FURTHER HOPE

Was it the fault of the heralds or of the hearers or of both? Doubtless there were faults on both sides. As regards the hearers, the acceptance, overnight so to speak, of ways diametrically opposed to their traditions, customs and

whole way of life; their polygamy; their fear of the all-powerful *mganga*, sorcerer or medicineman, all these led them to be cautious of accepting what did not appear to them as such good tidings. On the part of the heralds one detects a failure to live up to what was expected of them. Throughout the early journals we notice a pervading feeling of despair and loss of hope, e.g., "Can we have more conversions?" Another negative aspect of the mission was that it had become a very popular stop-over not only for missionary caravans which was natural enough, but also for all sorts of others, notably hunting expeditions on their way to Serengeti. A lot of time seems to have been given to playing host to wealthy adventurers from Europe and then proceeding with them on the hunt. Needless to say all this must have been detrimental to the work of evangelisation, both as regards time lost and the attitude towards the Fathers which the locals must have formed in their minds.

In their day to day lives, the Fathers seemed to have closed in on themselves; the *Journals* become full of references as to who said what Mass and who gave Solemn Benediction on which Feast; we read "...today we opened a new cabbage plot"...but no reference to opening an out-station; a frequent entry is "Nothing of significance today". Was this frustration with the indifference of the people? The idea of the Christian Village did not enhance the mission either. As the original group grew up, they were ostracised as being a lower breed and were referred to as *Wajomba* which broadly meant *WaZanzibari* or *Waswahili*, whose own moral way of life was not of the highest standard. Why did the Fathers not pay more attention to the adults... why this, why that; why not this, why not that? Was it God's secret, as one of the Fathers suggested? In spite of the lack of hope, the seed was sown, and "...night and day while he (the sower) sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing – how he does not know. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time; he starts to reap because the harvest has come" (Mark 4: 26-29). Later it was time for the harvest to come.

ADDENDUM: A NOTE ON TEMBO AND RELATED PROBLEMS

In his account of his safari to Kilimanjaro, Doctor Chanel tells us that at the overnight stop at Rabai no one was allowed to leave the camp for fear of getting drunk on the local *tembo* which was in plentiful supply from the abundance of coconut palm trees in the area. We may add at this point that

the early Protestant missionaries had the same experience as the Catholics as regards the negative aspects of some of the local customs and practices they met with. Kraph, the spearhead of the Church Missionary Society personnel, speaking of “the licentious behaviour of the villagers” at Rabai says: “...palm toddy being their favourite beverage, and the groves of lofty coconut palms surrounding their villages serving, so to speak, as their immediate and inexhaustible wine cellar”. We may also add that reading the early journal of Kraph, Rebman, New and other Protestants we are struck by their similarity to those of the Catholic Fathers, with constant references to “...the strong bulwarks to Christianity” such as traditional pagan ceremonies, addiction to *tembo*, dances, polygamy etc. as well as the questioning of the missionaries’ motives in coming among the people.

GIRIAMA

We have seen the pioneering work of the missionaries dedicated to the Holy Spirit in three areas: in the waters of the Indian Ocean from Reunion to Zanzibar; in the shabby streets and alleyways of the Coastal Town of Mombasa; and in the hill country around Bura in Taita, about one hundred and twenty miles inland. The next sphere of spiritual influence to which they gave attention, and into which they moved was, if not desert, at least scrub and semi-desert. Travelling inland from Mombasa through the Coastal Plain which is reasonably fertile especially during the rains, one enters the region known to the local people as the Nyika. This area of scrubland which abounds particularly in the *ngoja kidogo* shrub which catches your clothes and skin with its sharp thorns, as if telling you to wait a minute links up with the Taru Desert and with the vast expanse of the Tsavo Region today a National Park. It is the home of the *Miji Kenda*, the *Nine Tribes* who eke out an existence which, especially in the dry seasons, borders on subsistence level. Surrounded by their herds of miserably skinny cattle and hardy goats, their meagre tillage is confined almost completely to the growing of maize and beans. The largest of these tribes is that of the Wagiriama who span the hinterland area from Mombasa to Malindi and beyond and give their name in a more limited way to the area around Kaloleni, some twenty miles from Mombasa as well as to St Michael’s Mission founded at Mwabayanyundo which is always referred to as Giriama Mission.

The first reference to missionary interest in Giriama country comes from



Fathers' House, Mombasa Mission, built 1899 - 1900

the pen of that indefatigable pioneer, Fr Alexander Le Roy. During his five months' stay at Mombasa in 1889 he made reconnaissance trips both north and south of the town. He was impressed with Malindi, which, he wrote, "...seems to have a future". He had bought two houses there, both of which were soon burnt down, whether intentionally or not we are not told. He also purchased a plot of land at Jilore, in the Sabaki River Valley which, he tells us, was later stolen by rival missionaries, who in turn had to abandon it because of constant sickness. The other places he visited were: Giriama – "...a heavily populated countryside although frequently subjected to drought and where the water of the streams is nearly everywhere yellowish"; Kauma; Chonyi, Jibana, Ribe and Rabai. He said that everywhere he went he found the people "...friendly but given to drinking too much *tembo*".

Both Monsignor de Courmont and Fr Le Roy spent some time around Malindi on their return from the Tana River in early 1890, as a result of which the Monsignor wrote to Colonel Euan Smith, Governor of Zanzibar (we have seen correspondence between the two in the chapter on Zanzibar) describing their experiences in the Tana River area and then continuing: "On the return journey I visited the lower course of the Sabaki. There, too, I would very much like to start a mission. The advantage would be, from the point of view of local interests, to contribute to the founding of a

population (doubtless he had the Christian Village policy in mind) thus settling a magnificent though deserted country; and furthermore to assist in the establishment of communications, up to now non-existent, between Malindi and Uganda, that beautiful province of the English territory for whose rich produce an easy access to the Coast will be a boon". Wishful thinking on de Courmont's part! With the arrival of the Kenya-Uganda Railway all thought of other communications systems between the coast and the interior were put aside. Today, a hundred years later, the only road inland from Malindi of any length is that going through Tsavo East National Park joining up with the Mombasa Nairobi road at Manyani.

No further references to the Malindi or Sabaki areas are found in the early journals. Giriama country, meaning the area radiating out from Kaloleni as focal point, is next mentioned in the Mombasa Journal of 1893 when a delegation arrived from Kambe asking for a Catholic Mission. Mr Pigott, the then Director of the I.B.E.A. Company refused permission on the grounds that Kambe was too near Ribe where the Methodists were already established. He informed the Fathers, however, that they were welcome to Chonyi and Jibana country. No mission was founded at Kambe, but a small catechumenate was opened, the occasion being celebrated with a feast "...of a goat and half a bag of rice shared between a party of eighty seven people". Around this time, the Fathers started a policy of opening small catechumenates, and ones similar to that of Kambe were opened at Jibana and Chonyi. The catechists were the Children of the Mission brought from Bagamoyo, instructed at Mombasa, and who lived on the spot. They were visited regularly by Fathers from Mombasa, the names of Frs Joseph Koenig and Emile Clause being foremost among those mentioned. Needless to say, in those days of foot travel these visits took a few days with the Father sleeping in a little makeshift *makuti banda*. The late Fr James Lynch, while parish priest of St Theresa's mission, Chonyi, was told an interesting story about one of these catechumenates at Vevesi, a lovely spot which commands a view of the coastal plain to the sea shore, and which is now an outstation of the mission. It seems that the plot acquired by the Fathers was too near the local *kaya*, or sacred grove, and the witchdoctors objected. They harassed the catechist and the Father so much with frenetic night-drumming that they made life there impossible for them, and they had to quit the place, temporarily at least.

ST MICHAEL'S MISSION, MWABAYANYUNDO, GIRIAMA

The first reference to Mwabayanyundo, where the mission of Giriama was eventually to be built, is found in the *Mombasa Journal* for September 1893. We are told that a group of six Wagiriama came from *Kilema ya Nyundo*, asking that a mission be built there and another at Kafuneni, near Bamba. They were welcomed and told that a catechumenate would be started with hopes that a mission would follow – but they were to keep quiet about this visit to the Catholic Fathers for fear of opposition from other Christian missionaries! (At this period we begin to get more references to this rivalry among different missionary groups – an unfortunate occurrence in the work of spreading of the Gospel.) Their spokesman, Boho, and his companions returned home fortified with the promise of a future mission and encouraged with the gift of pearl necklaces. A few days later, Mr Pigott, who had refused permission for a mission at Kambe, gave the go-ahead for one at Mwabayanyundo. A further meeting was held with Boho and a catechumenate was started. A few months later, in December, the policy of having a number of catechumenates scattered around was dropped. They were to be closed in favour of building up a central one, that of Mwabayanyundo.

Giriama is not mentioned again until 1895 when we are told that the catechumenate there is still holding on. As yet no mission had been established, but "...Noah, the catechist has a group of about thirty living around his house. He says that if the Fathers build a mission there, lots of people will come to take refuge there". Noah does not say from whom or from what these people would take refuge but most likely it was from the Maasai who used to make cattle raids from time to time as far as Kaloleni, just three miles from Mwabayanyundo. Kaloleni, seemingly, gets its name from "keep a watch out" – for the marauding Maasai.

In 1896 we meet Fr Jean Baptiste Ball for the first time. Giriama was to become his pet project from Mombasa. He visited the place regularly and in 1899 he was joined in this work by Fr Felix Boule. They both report baptising people in danger of death from time to time but there is no sign yet of building up a solid Christian community. In 1903 the Wagiriama became more and more fearful of the Maasai and begged Fr Ball to come and live there permanently and to display a flag, the purpose of which was to frighten away the raiders. A temporary hut was built and the papal flag flown over it

but the degree of its effectiveness is not recorded. On one of his visits to the little station Fr Ball found the flag flying upside down with the papal tiara facing downwards, but as he records "...the elders found nothing wrong with that".

PERMANENT RESIDENCE: EARLY SETBACKS: FIRST DEATHS

As 1903 drew to a close the two Fathers took up residence on the hill and January 1904 is given as the official date of the opening of St Michael's Mission, Mwabayanyundo, Giriama. The first entry in the *Mission Journal* is as follows.

"5th January 1904: Thanks be to God! A vow made many years ago by Fr Ball has been realised today. His arrival means that Fr Boule who has been here for five days is no longer alone, and that the community of the Giriama Catholic Mission has started. We are here, not for a few days or a few weeks but, God willing, to remain here for good no matter what privations present themselves". Did they really foresee the terrible privations that would follow, not only for them but also for their successors for many a year?

The *Journal* paints a dismal picture of the hut which served as their first abode: "We have no chapel; the hut is too narrow; we have no water, no canal, no cistern, no well. We have to travel far to get water since this has been a particularly dry year. Three children go off with a donkey every day to get water; meanwhile we dig for some among the rocks at the foot of the hill". So for many years progress was discouragingly slow as it had been at Mombasa and Bura. The entry for January 1st 1905 reads: "A year has passed, one full of hardships and, alas, empty of results both spiritual and material. We pray that the Good Lord will bless our sufferings and our work, and ease the situation here. Nevertheless we must thank Heaven... things might have been worse...what kind of New Year will it be for us?"

The privations and setbacks continued. For Easter Sunday 1907 we read: "He has risen as He said. Alleluia. Our Easter ceremonies were less solemn than in other missions better off than ourselves – nevertheless it gave us heart. Let us hope that we shall see the day when our Christians will become numerous and fervent. But even Christ "...had to suffer and so enter his glory". When God deems that the time of trial here has been sufficient, the Christianity of St Michael's will also rise from the dust to live the life of Jesus Christ". This time of trial was far from ended and the frustrations of the



Star of the Sea Convent - 1912.

missionaries continue unabated in their *Journal* entries: “Our Visitor from the Mother House is profoundly shocked at our poverty... Our Christians rarely come to Mass; not much hope of more instruction; our poor chapel is in a terrible condition... the people work very haphazardly; they never dream of working to help us... only to get food from us...” Do we not perceive here an echo of the Rice Christians of early Chinese evangelisation?

On top of all this came the tragic deaths of two of the Fathers within a few years of each other. The first Holy Ghost Father to die on the Mombasa mainland was Felix Boule who had worked so hard with Fr Ball to put St Michael’s on its feet. Fr Ball describes his death as follows: “20th February 1909: Fr Boule down with (blackwater) fever. We (i.e. Fr Ball and Brother Othon Weigel) advise him to go to Mombasa, but he thinks it is better to get over the fever first. However, as his condition got worse during the day we decided to bring him to Mombasa tomorrow in the oxcart. 21st: Fr Boule too sick to be moved. 22nd: His condition worsens. We send a letter to Doctor Bowen, a friend of the Fathers, at Mombasa but doubt if he can arrive in time. Later in the night I anointed Fr Boule who kept repeating: ‘Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in this last hour’. He gave a gentle sigh and was no longer physically with us. It was 9.45 p.m. His rapid and unforeseen death came as a great shock to us. I went to bed but sleep would not come”. Fr Boule was but forty-eight years old.

Four years later the second death occurred, that of Fr Joseph Loos, who died on June 4th 1913. His death was recorded as follows: Fr Loos writes:

“June 2nd 1913: ...a most monotonous day. Sombre weather; no sunshine; not a bird singing; the land seems to be abandoned”. 3rd: Brother Erhard Durmeier writes: “It is someone other than Fr Loos who continues this *Journal*. God is sometimes hard in the trials He sends us and at times gives a blow which knocks us down. This morning the good Father went for a walk with one of the children to inspect the coconuts. Walking along a narrow overgrown path he stepped on a snake of the most venomous kind. The snake attacked, got inside the leg of Father’s trousers and bit him on the calf of his leg. The young boy immediately started sucking the blood from the wound but the infection had started to spread. Fr Loos managed to drag himself to the house, but there was no medicine there! The local people gave him medicine to induce vomiting, but he gradually got worse until midnight. 4th: At 1.30a.m. Fr Loos surrendered his soul to God. He had remained conscious until the last moment. What a sad death; with no fellow priest to assist him; to die such a sudden an unexpected death; to be alive that morning and dead that evening! But the good God has allowed it and we can but bow our heads in resignation. He is Master. 5th: Fr Loos was buried today by Fr Maurice Dalais. Fr Loos was only thirty three years old”. Fr Dalais died three years later at the age of thirty six.

“UNTIL WHEN, OH LORD?”

We have tried to see the reasons for the slowness of the early evangelisation in Mombasa and Bura. The reasons for it in Giriama country would seem to be closely allied to those at Bura. The young Children of the Mission brought from Bagamoyo to be the nucleus of the new mission were never fully accepted by the locals as had been the case at Bura, and were called *Wanyamwezi*, referring to their place of origin in German East Africa. The root cause however, was the fact that the Wagiriama people were settled in their ageless traditions and could see little advantage towards bettering their daily lives by accepting this strange new religion. It would seem that the only thing that would change them would be the promise of an effortless overnight Utopia, which, of course, the Fathers could not give. The ubiquitous enemies of missionary activity: fear inspired by the awesome power of witchcraft and the overindulgence in *tembo*, held sway. The Fathers’ motives and movements were the objects of suspicion. Alfred Wray, the C.M.S. Missionary associated with their ill-fated mission at Ndara (see

chapter on Bura) wrote "...when the rains failed questions began to circulate: 'Is it the presence of the white man that is keeping back the rain? Why has he come here anyway? He has not given us presents. He does not buy our ivory or slaves and he refuses to pay our children for being taught how to read and write'," Johann Ludwig Krapf writes in the same vein during his trip to Ukambani: "...If I wished to read they asked if I was trying to spy into their hearts or whether I was looking for rain and enquiring after diseases. When I wrote they wanted to know what I had written and whether it contained sorcery. Everyone of my movements was sharply observed". Nigel Pavitt in his book: *Kenya – The First Explorers* – from which the last two quotations are taken says: "It is evident that the locals felt they were not reaping any benefit from the missionaries' presence, and it took many years of painstaking work to overcome their apathy". The position of the Catholic Missionaries in Giriama, as also in Bura, could be well summed up in these same words, and we can be excused for wondering if from time to time they asked themselves the question of the people of Ndara: "Why have we come here, anyway?" However, as in the case of Bura, the seed had been sown, and in good time that which had been sown in tears – and in blood! – would be reaped in joy.

SOURCES:

Mombasa Journal

Giriama Journal

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PART III

THE EXPANSION PERIOD

CHAPTER V

The Mission Drive

We have seen the painful births of the mother churches at Mombasa, Bura and Giriama, and the difficulties of the early days which resulted in an almost stagnant church for many years. However, as we have already said, the seed had been sown, and day and night it was sprouting and growing until in time it was to become mature, bear fruit and eventually spread.

We left the Holy Ghost Mission, Mombasa, at the turn of this century with a following of about five hundred Catholics "...mostly Goans, a few Europeans and fifty Africans" and boasting of a chapel with seating for four hundred and a fine Fathers' house which still serves that purpose today. From it the missions of Bura and Giriama had been founded and efforts had been made to establish catechumenates here and there on the mainland. Let us now see what progress it made over the years, and especially how it was responsible for the founding of the one mission which did more than any other for the growth and spread of the faith, particularly along the Coastal Region – Makupa Mission.

Present day Kenya had by now become a British Protectorate, and it was obvious to the Holy Ghost Fathers that it would be better to have English speaking missionaries there rather than the hitherto French speaking ones. As the Irish Province was growing rapidly, the Vicariate of Zanzibar was put in their charge, its first Irish Vicar Apostolic being Monsignor John Neville who succeeded Monsignor Allegeyer and took up his residence in Zanzibar in 1913. Mombasa mission got a great boost when in March of the following year he made what can only be described as a triumphal entry into Mombasa. In the *Standard* of March 15th, 1914 we read "...the church grounds and chapel were magnificently decorated for the occasion, and, in honour of the new Bishop's nationality the flags of Old Ireland dominated the bunting. Dr. Alex de Souza read the address". The *Standard* report describes the Bishop as addressing the "vast congregation paternally as 'My dear people' whom he thanked for ...the triumphal arches and beautiful shamrocks". He soon, however, came down to earth reminding his audience that they were a mere handful in a pagan country, and moreover were nearly all"...foreigners from England (government employees), India (the Goans) and the heart of Africa", (the redeemed slaves brought from Bagamoyo). Bishop Neville thus highlighted the fact that up to that time there had been little or no evangelisation of local Africans. He then pointed out how inadequate the mission chapel had become. "I see people at Mass kneeling outside as far as the street..." and promised to help build a new one. From Mombasa, Bishop

Neville proceeded to Nairobi to visit the mission established there.

The outbreak of World War I held up the fulfilment of his promise to help build a new church at Mombasa and it was not until 1919 that plans were drawn up. Construction was started under the supervision of Brother Gustave Walter and the church was completed in 1923. It is Romanesque in style and has twin towers. Brother Gustave originally built one only but it collapsed while he was away in Nairobi. Returning by train, as he passed along what is now Dedan Kimathi Road, he looked out of the window to admire his tower. It must be remembered that at that time the only buildings in the area were low *makuti* roofed houses and the church could be clearly seen from where the Pandya Memorial Clinic stands today. Imagine his surprise when he saw none. He thereupon decided that two good solid towers were better than one fallen one. The interior of the church is graced with a beautiful high altar, richly coloured stained glass windows (particularly that of St Patrick, Patron of Ireland), and a roof which is a facsimile of that of Westminster Cathedral, London, each truss being of Indian teak and weighing a ton. Brother Gustave probably never foresaw that the church he built would become a cathedral, which it did when Mombasa became a separate diocese and got its first bishop in 1957, needing neither renovation nor extension to make it a worthy seat for the future bishops of Mombasa. The original chapel then became a printing press and bookshop until 1969. It was demolished a few years later to make room for Ambalal House which now dominates the area which had become the mission site in 1897.

MAKUPA MISSION – OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

We can hardly speak of a missionary drive until Makupa mission emerged – which did not happen until the 1930's. This mission, dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Help and which was to beget so many outstations and new missions, had very humble origins. With the development of Kilindini Harbour and the railway, more and more Africans from up country began to drift into Mombasa – the fore-runners of modern Mombasa's huge sprawling working class population. At first they were mostly of the Luo tribe and tended to make their living quarters in the areas around Kilindini, the present Railway Terminus, Shimanzi, the Makupa and Majengo area particularly. At the same time Tudor was becoming the fashionable area for Europeans and better off Indians; Ganjoni became more or less the Goan and Seychelles area

while the Old Town remained Arab and Muslim; Nyali was still bush country to a great extent.

Seeing these developments, the Fathers at Mombasa mission acquired a plot in the area close to the present Railway Station. Fr Alphonsus Loogman, the pioneer of Makupa, tells us: "...we built a small building there, no more than eighteen by six yards, constructed of *boriti* and mud with a *makuti* roof". It was used mainly for catechism classes in the evenings but on feastdays a Father from the mission would say Mass there. This little establishment acquired its own baptism register in which the first Makupa baptism is recorded – that of a Richard Odongo who was baptised on 7th June 1919. As numbers increased, a larger building was erected with a large central room to be used as classroom and chapel, a room for the catechist to live in, an office and overnight bedroom for the visiting Father from the mission. The Fathers at the mission had their own titles according to the division of work, and the Fathers who visited Makupa (as they had earlier visited Giriama before it became a separate mission) were referred to as *Father in charge of Native Work*. This "native work" really got under way with Fr Loogman in charge of it. He started coming to the catechumenate on Fridays and staying till Sunday. By 1924 three Masses were being said there on Sundays with confessions on Wednesday evenings and Mass on Thursday mornings. Catechism classes took place every day with separate classes for school children, women, domestic servants and "other men".



Porters at Mombasa ready for a caravan to Kilema. It was from such porters as these that the Fathers first heard of Bura.

In 1930 the new Town Planning Scheme set aside the large area now consisting of the Railway Station and Station Road (now Haile Selassie Road) was built to link up with the Old Town. The mission plot was affected, so the Fathers immediately set about looking for a new site, this time in the heart of the African Quarter around Makupa. They foresaw the need for a large plot which would house a school, Sisters' convent, church and Fathers' house. They found an ideal one. The story goes that an elderly lady offered a plot of three and a half acres to the Fathers free, on condition that they would take care of her until her death. The Fathers, afraid she might live on indefinitely, turned down the offer. It was taken up by a West Indian Doctor, William Africanus Bowen (the *Africanus* refers to the fact that he was a negro), who was relieved of the responsibility of a long watch over the good lady by the fact that she died soon afterwards. Dr Bowen then offered the plot to the Mission at £700 an acre, a stiff enough price at the time. The Fathers, having made no progress in acquiring a plot, ruefully accepted.

Francis Mzee who was born in Bura in 1906 of Bagamoyo parents and who is still living in Makupa gives 1928 as the year of the deal. He was one of the Children of the Mission brought across town to clear enough land to mark the boundaries after the plot had been surveyed for a new mission. A catechumenate – we could call it a continuation of the railway catechumenate – was started. Raymond Salim, a grandson of Bagamoyo parents, remembers coming down from the Mombasa mission along with other boys to clear the



Bura: Catechism class - about 1904

whole compound and mark out the buildings under the supervision of Fr Loogman and Br Savinus Van Grootel. Another old-timer, Anton, adds that Makupa was originally called Majengo Mission. Plans were drawn up for a church, Fathers' house, Sisters' house, school, dispensary, maternity, and teachers' house. Brother Gustave, already mentioned in connection with the building of Mombasa Church, joined the building team and work went ahead. The mission of our Lady of Perpetual Help was officially opened in 1932, and the following year on 28th May, Cardinal Hinsley, Papal Legate to East Africa formally blessed it. At that moment it consisted of the church, four classrooms and three teachers' houses.

It will be noticed that as yet there was no Fathers' residence at Makupa. For the next five years it continued to be run from The Mission, as the Mombasa mission was now called. Some of the Fathers associated with these early days of Makupa remembered by the *Wazee* there are Frs Etienne Vogel, Patrick O'Connor, Albert Vettiger, Kevin Devenish, Desmond Connaughton, Colman MacMahon, and finally, the first priest to live at Makupa – that was in 1937 – Fr Edward Lawless, still remembered today in Makupa as Fr Lawlessi.

Makupa grew from strength to strength. Confirmation took place there for the first time in 1936, giving the new mission its first boost. The year 1946 saw Makupa in festive mood for two church dignitaries. The first was Archbishop David Matthew who had succeeded Cardinal Hinsley as Apostolic Delegate. In a summary of the first years of Makupa, Fr Ryan wrote: "...A most enthusiastic reception was given to the Apostolic Delegate. For the occasion a special platform was erected and the grounds were adorned with flags and bunting. Archbishop Matthew said Mass and afterwards received an address of welcome to which he replied in Swahili..." The second occasion was the formal visit of the newly consecrated Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar, Bishop John J. McCarthy. We are told that he received an enthusiastic welcome, "...with incense at the church door...", almost equalling that given to Archbishop Matthew. We get the feeling that Makupa had now outstripped Mombasa in importance. It had become the centre of church activity for the "native" population, and the future centre of missionary drive outwards from Mombasa Island.

WAA

Before pursuing Makupa's missionary output, we must turn aside for a moment to another area where evangelisation started from the Mombasa

mission. The missionary experience of the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers in Nigeria had, under the energetic influence of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, highlighted the importance of education in the apostolate. The same became the case in Kenya once the machinery got going. From the start, as we have seen, catechumenates for the teaching of religion were started. These were then followed by what were called *Shamba Schools* or *Elementary Schools* which taught the three R's. The first step into further education for the Catholic Church outside the island of Mombasa was to accept the running of St George's School, Waa, about ten miles from Mombasa on the South Coast. It had been built as a government school in 1927 with classes up to Standard Eight culminating in the final Preliminary Examination which opened the way to secondary education for the lucky few who scored sufficient marks. The Mombasa mission took over the school in 1935 and eventually sent pupils from it to the Catholic secondary schools at Kabaa and Mangu up country.

The first headmaster was the energetic Fr Michael Witte who had spent some time "bush whacking" in Chonyi country, but who is better known for his association with Kabaa High School and Taveta Technical School. He was very keen on what he called personality cult and used to give his pupils informal chats on the many aspects of character building. Waa, however, proved to be very unhealthy; being low lying (the Fathers' house – the present headmistress' house – is built on cement stilts), it was infested with mosquitoes, and the Fathers kept coming down with malaria. The frequency of their admission to Mombasa Hospital (then known as the European Hospital) gave rise to the story that a special "waa bed" was kept in readiness for them!

The Government eventually agreed to a proposal that the Fathers build a new St George's at Mwabayanyundo, Giriama, and the pupils would be transferred there. Frs Patrick McCambridge and John Gannon undertook the new building scheme and St George's Intermediate School, Giriama was opened in the early 1950's. In January 1957 it was promoted to secondary level becoming the first Catholic secondary (high) school in the Coast Province outside Mombasa Island. St George's Secondary School in the early days was fed principally from Mombasa intermediate schools, the majority coming from Makupa intermediate school. Its first headmaster was Fr Liam O'Connor who had already become well known in Mombasa as a no-nonsense educationalist, and who to this day is remembered and thanked by

hundreds of young men who passed through his hands, and whose strong characters he helped to mould. He was assisted by the completely contrasting quiet, self-effacing Fr Odran Maguire, equally remembered and thanked by so many ex-pupils. These two pioneers were followed by Frs Joseph Keena and Gerard Hannan, and it was principally due to these early stalwarts – all now gone to their eternal reward – that St George's became one of the leading secondary schools at the Coast.

MAKUPA SPREADS ITS WINGS – COASTAL SAFARIS

The modern expansion of the missionary efforts, not only in and around Mombasa but also along the North and South Mainlands came, not from the mother mission situated in what was fast becoming the commercial centre of the town, but from Makupa, in the thickly populated African Quarter on the western outskirts of the island. At first, progress was slow. One of the principal reasons for this was the lack of personnel. Not long after Makupa became a residential mission, the Second World War broke out in 1939 and all German and Italian missionaries in Kenya were interned. Their places were filled by priests from the Allied countries and from neutral states such as the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers, some of whom were posted as far away as Ethiopia. It was not until 1945 that expansion began to take place. In that year there were only five Catholic missions at the Coast – Mombasa, Makupa, Bura, Giriama and Waa School.

In the latter half of the forties, the Makupa Fathers started travelling out of Mombasa, establishing new elementary schools, catechumenates and revitalising old ones. They covered the coastline from Kilifi in the north to Lunga Lunga in the south – a distance of over a hundred miles. What an undertaking for one mission! These catechumenates were established mainly in the sisal and sugar plantations along the coast whose work forces were recruited mostly from up country migrant workers. There were permanent catechists at these outstations and the Fathers went on regular safaris lasting a week or so at a time, examining, encouraging, administering the Sacraments and settling *Shauris* (disputes).

OUR LADY OF FATIMA – KONGOWEA

The first of Makupa's outstations to become a mission in its own right was that of Kongowea. Its beginnings go back to Fr Harry Byrne who, as parish

priest of Makupa in 1954, opened an elementary school on the Kisauni side of Utange on the old Mombasa-Malindi Road. A small catechumenate developed and Mass was said there from time to time. In the same year Makupa undertook another kind of catechumenate – that in the newly built Shimo la Tewa prison to which the prisoners from Fort Jesus and Kingorani had been transferred. This catechumenate and the regular Masses proved, and continue to prove, to be a great success. Bamburi Cement Factory opened in 1955 and a catechumenate was opened with Mass being said on alternate Sundays in the Company's Social Hall. In 1956 an elementary school and catechumenate was opened nearer town at Kisauni. It flourished, boasting a roll call of over a hundred children. Adults came for instruction in the evenings and Mass was said every Sunday.

With all this groundwork done from Makupa, after a few years it was decided that the area from Tudor Creek to Mtwapa Creek deserved its own parish. A large plot at Kisauni Maweni was acquired in 1959. The Kisauni school was transferred to this plot and continued there in a *makuti banda*. The catechumenate thrived and Mass was said there every Sunday. In 1960 it was cut off from Makupa, established as a mission called Kongowea and dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima. Fr Sean O'Connell was appointed in charge. Having run the mission from Makupa to begin with, he took up residence there in December, 1961. He gave the mission the title of: Our Lady of Fatima Parish: North and South Mainland. The new mission took over all the establishments previously in Makupa's charge and Fr O'Connell had the following formidable list of outstations under his charge: Nyali, Shimo la Tewa, Mtopanga, Famoni, Kikambala, Shauri Moyo, Mtongwe, Waa, Gazi and Ramisi.

SACRED HEART, SHANZU

Over the next few years, the outstations north of Kongowea which developed most were Utange and Bamburi. In the seventies the need for a new parish which would develop these and go further afield became more and more urgent. Utange seemed to be the ideal place and a new parish was established there under Fr Thomas McDonald in 1977. It stretched from the Bamburi Factory north to Mtwapa Creek, and west to the municipal boundary bordering Kilifi District, its outstations being Bamburi, Shimo la Tewa Secondary School and Shanzu Teachers' Training College. This left

Kongowea free to develop its remaining principal outstations, Mtopanga and Bombolulu. With Fr McDonald's transfer to Nairobi, the new parish found itself "fatherless" for almost two years. Makupa came to the rescue, however, in the persons of the late Frs Liam O'Connor, James Lynch and Noel O'Rourke who kept it alive until the appointment of Fr Thomas Barron, who was living in 1978 at the Bishop's house, Nyali. A small plot at Shanzu was obtained in 1980 and Fr Barron decided that it should become the site for the parish centre. A busy building programme followed and, when ready in 1983, the new parish was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The outstation at Bamburi got a shot in the arm when the Cement Company gave the mission its own plot on which a stone church was built and dedicated to St Paul.

Attention was now directed towards two new areas – Kiembeni and Mwakirunge. Kiembeni, skirting the Old Mombasa-Malindi Road, was beginning to grow quickly as a middle class residential area. In the absence of a church plot Mass was at first offered in parishioners' houses. Later on permission was given to use a small plot on which a *banda* was built and which is still being used. A new plot has been bought recently and plans are underway for what is hoped to be yet another parish.

Mwakirunge has an interesting history. The Dr Bowen referred to previously in connection with the purchase of the Makupa plot bought a twelve acre plot there in the early twenties. Shortly before he died in 1925 he bequeathed this plot to the Catholic Church. Mwakirunge is situated inland at the furthestmost point of Tudor Creek and in those days was accessible from Mombasa only by canoe. The area, on the fringe of Giriama country, was thinly populated and devoid of roads. Its existence faded from the memory of the Mombasa Fathers until it was rediscovered in 1946 by the late Fr Laurence Nugent. He had no difficulty in persuading the equally adventuresome Fr Edmund Ryan to undertake the long canoe journey up the Creek to see how things stood at Mwakirunge. They were given a warm welcome by a few local Muslims. One of them, Fundi Juma, assured them that the land belonged to the Church, but according to a Miji Kenda custom, the coconuts planted on it belonged to the person who planted them, namely himself. This friendly reception encouraged Fr Ryan to follow up the question of the legality of the Church's ownership of the plot. On visiting the Mombasa Municipal Land Office he was shown the demarcation of the plot according to Dr Bowen's will but was informed that the land had never been registered in the Church's name! Being informed that this could be done on

the spot for the princely sum of twenty shillings, Fr Ryan gladly parted with the money and secured the legality of the ownership.

Another forty years or so passed before anything else happened. It had been offered to congregations of both Sisters and Brothers but had been rejected as being unsuitable for their needs. It was not until the eighties when Shanzu had become a well established parish that interest in the place was revived. By this time roads were being laid down, the population was increasing and a Government primary school had been built...partly on the mission's dormant plot! Fr Barron saw that the place had possibilities, fenced in the plot and put up a few temporary buildings. A Mtaita who ran the local *duka* was the only Catholic in the vicinity. He offered to open a catechumenate which soon took hold and is now visited regularly from Shanzu. A sign of the growth and progress of the place can be seen in the proud appearance of Mwakirunge Church Choir who sang a moving song about the Crucifixion at the 1989 Mombasa Catholic Choirs' Festival of Church Music. Fr Ryan, who provided the history of this little outpost has summed it up as follows: "The growth was unexpected, but it was real. It resembles the strong rapid growth of vegetation in Africa when a long period of drought is followed by plentiful rainfall".

ST MARY'S CHANGAMWE

With the North and South Mainlands taken off its hands with the establishment of Kongowea, Makupa now turned its attention to Changamwe, westwards across the Makupa Causeway, an area which was beginning to experience a population explosion as factories and industrial plants began to mushroom overnight. In 1956 a local Muslim had given permission for catechism classes to be given under a tree on a plot owned by him near Msikiti Nuru. What humble beginnings! Little did this good man foresee the rate of growth of this first small catechumenate, and when the first Mass was said there in June of that year the size of the congregation frightened him so much that he began to regret his offer. However, the expected withdrawal of his permission to use the plot was counterbalanced by the approval of a plot of five acres for a Catholic mission school by the Mombasa Municipal Council – of which Fr William O'Neill was a member and doubtless influenced the decision in favour of the Catholic Church. A temporary *banda* was put up and passed for use by the authorities pending the

building of a permanent school. This was built by Fr William Jenkinson in 1957 and was ready for use the following year.

A temporary *makuti* covered timber chapel was built and Fr James Delaney began administering there from Makupa as from January 1957, with confessions on Saturdays and Mass on Sundays. This building collapsed in 1960 and a hastily constructed *makuti* building with open sides and coconut tree trunks for seats served as a chapel until the present church was built by Fr Michael Madigan. This was ready in 1963 and on September 16th St Mary's Church, Changamwe became Makupa's second offspring with Fr Michael J. O'Connor in charge.

MIRITINI

From Changamwe the usual missionary policy swung into action – putting out feelers for catechumenates. The first development was northwards. Mass was said each week at Kwa Jomvu and catechism was taught in Miritini D.E.B. School. Miritini became a parish in 1985 thanks mainly to the efforts of Fr Peter O'Toole who had previously been used to bush-whacking in the remote areas of Taveta and the Tana River. Fr O'Toole quickly adapted to town life and with Makupa as base worked tirelessly to build a fine complex. He was joined by Fr Michael Madigan, a veteran of over forty years experience in Taita, Giriama and Makupa, and together they developed the large compound which today houses a fine church, a nursery school, a sewing school and a Fathers' residence.

MIKINDANI, CHAANI, BOMU.

About this time the small Christian communities began to take root in the Mombasa parishes. Changamwe had three *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo* which grew and developed so quickly and so solidly that they became parishes in quick succession. Mikindani had started as a *Jumuiya* in 1983 and got a tremendous boost when the following year the Municipal Council gave the Church a plot in the Site and Service Scheme which was to turn Mikindani into one big community with the usual religious, educational and social facilities to be made available. Fr Martin Keane, resident at Changamwe, was responsible for developing the plot and became the first parish priest of St Matthias Malumba Catholic Church in 1986. It became a beehive of activity and today consists of

a Youth Polytechnic (offering courses in carpentry, masonry, motor mechanics, welding and fabrication), dispensary, nursery school, dressmaking school – and at present a fine church is under construction. Chaani had a similar history, becoming a parish dedicated to the Holy Cross under Fr John Monteiro in 1986. It is still being developed, its latest addition being a private secondary boarding school for girls. Bomu, where a *Jumuiya* had been started in 1985 became a parish in 1987 and was entrusted to the Maryknoll Missionary Fathers with Fr Michael Callanan as the first parish priest. At first Mass was offered in the local municipal school but in 1988 Bomu acquired its own plot, and a church, dedicated to St Stephen was started. In 1990 Bomu was looked after by Fr Joseph Trainor who runs it from his residence in Tudor. As this was not a satisfactory arrangement, plans were underway in 1990 for a large church and Father's house.

TUDOR

The next Makupa outstation to become a mission was that of Tudor, only a stone's throw from the mother church. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, as Mombasa began to grow, Tudor became a fashionable residential area for Europeans, Indians and Goans. However, as the years went by the African population there began to grow and a large group of municipal flats was built overlooking Tudor Creek. Makupa got a large plot on the edge of these flats, built a primary school there and aptly named it Marycliff. Fr Patrick Leonard started going there in 1962 for Sunday Mass. About the same time another plot was obtained nearer the centre of the residential area in more open ground. While it was lying fallow, so to speak, it was decided that it was not in a suitable spot, and after some negotiations another plot was obtained from the Kenya Breweries. Fr James Delaney, having helped to put Changamwe on its feet, took over Tudor and became the first parish priest when the new church was blessed and dedicated to St Joseph on November 1st 1973.

LIKONI-MTONGWE

It will be remembered that Makupa had schools and catechumenates along the south coast as well as those north of Mombasa. As these continued to be visited regularly, that of Mtongwe began to show most progress and possibilities of development. Fr James Grennan built a school there and the

catechumenate flourished. The first baptism there was recorded in 1963. In the early seventies Fr Michael Shanley who was guestmaster at St Brendan's Rest House, Shelly Beach, undertook to look after Mtongwe. He also built a small chapel at Shikadabu along the coast road and visited the Kenya Navy Base at Mtongwe as well as the National Youth Service Quarters, Likoni. As Likoni began to grow with the influx of migrant workers from up-country, a plot was acquired there with a view to its becoming the central mission. This was built and opened in 1976 and confided to the Consolata Fathers with Fr Angelo Fantacci as first parish priest of Likoni-Mtongwe. The church at Likoni is dedicated to Our Lady of Consolata and has a fine social hall, nursery and dispensary. That at Mtongwe is dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy and also has a nursery school, social hall and catechist's house. The Catholic community at the Navy Base is attached to The Kenya Catholic Military Vicariate.

KICHAKA SIMBA

Makupa's last born parish is that of Kichaka Simba situated in the cool Kwale Hills about fifty miles south of Mombasa. On learning that there was to be a settlement scheme in this part of Kwale principally for Wakamba from around the Machakos area, Fr William Jenkinson got a plot there in 1954 before the settlers arrived. Later on others, particularly Wakikuyu and Wataita, obtained land so the whole area was ripe for the harvest. The Fathers from Makupa started visiting the new outstation at Kichaka Simba as part of their south coast safaris. As it and other catechumenates in the area grew, it was felt the time had come for it to become a mission. On Palm Sunday 1966, Frs Byrne, Jenkinson and Alois Ngoma, one of the first two diocesan priests to be ordained for Mombasa Diocese visited the area, said Mass there and met the people to discuss the possibility of a mission being started. There were over a hundred present at Mass with seventy receiving Holy Communion. They said they wanted a resident priest and would help him build the mission. Fr Alois returned for Easter weekend armed, as he relates in his journal: "...with a camp bed, a table and a cupboard". The *Journal* continues to describe the hardships of the early days but Fr Alois was persistent and when he left in 1969 to become Education Secretary he left behind him a thriving mission with more than twenty outstations.

With the founding of Kichaka Simba, Makupa got the long awaited breather

it deserved. It retired gracefully from “churchbearing” and settled down to its own home affairs. With the rapid population growth of Mombasa, particularly around Makupa and Makande, and the corresponding growth in the number of baptisms, Makupa had, and continues to have, more than enough on its plate. Surely the final word about Makupa must be that its contribution to the missionary effort in the Diocese of Mombasa had been beyond estimation.

EXPANSION IN KWALE DISTRICT NDAVAYA, KWALE SEMINARY AND KINANGO

Although further expansion in Kwale did not come from Makupa, this would seem to be the best place to deal with progress there rather than leave it now and return later. The Fathers at St George’s School, Waa, did not confine themselves to the four walls of the classroom but on top of their schoolwork started probing the inland Duruma Country along the Mombasa-Tanga Road which passed through Kwale and Kinango. They opened four or five elementary schools in this thinly populated area, appointed resident teachers, and visited them during school holidays. Archbishop McCarthy visited the area in 1948 and decided to establish a central mission. He chose Ndavaya, and in 1950 Fr Leonard Peeters of the Dutch Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers, previously working in the District of Morogoro, Tanzania, was appointed as first Father in Charge.

When St Mary’s Junior Seminary moved to Kwale Boma from Giriama in 1960, Frs Edward Corcoran and Denis Blackledge, like the earlier Fathers in Waa, looked around for apostolic work. They started saying Mass in the courthouse at Kinango, about half way between Kwale and Ndavaya. As had happened elsewhere numbers increased and soon Kinango became a parish in its own right, linking up Ndavaya and Mariakani and taking some outstations from each. It is now a well established mission with a fine government run hospital which was built by the Catholic Church. The seminary staff also started Sunday Masses at Matuga and at Ukunda along the coast, possible future parishes.

MIVUMONI AND RAMISI

We mentioned that Kichaka Simba had over twenty outstations by 1969. Of these, Mivumoni was the first to become a separate mission under the energetic

Fr Patrick Cooke who had made a name for himself as a builder while in Taita. Mivumoni took over all the coastal outstations belonging to Kichaka Simba and opened more. That of Ramisi was the next to become independent. It will be remembered that the workers in the sugar factory there had been visited from Makupa from the start. The Ramisi Sugar Factory gave the Church a gift of thirty nine acres at Kanana, just beyond the factory on the main road. A fine church and house were built there. The mission was dedicated to St Jude and officially opened in 1978 with Fr Diarmuid Casey as its first parish priest. The mission suffered a setback in numbers with the closure of the factory in 1989, but with nineteen outstations to look after the Father there has enough to do.

TAITA – VOI

We left the Holy Ghost Missionaries at Bura, Taita, in the early years of this century with no great progress to show for their twenty years there. However, as we have said, the seed had been sown and was waiting for maturity. The only reference we have seen so far to an outstation is to Mgange Nyika higher up the hills from Bura. The Fathers, however, had started moving out from Bura among the foothills and had opened catechumenates and schools where the three R's were taught. Adults started coming to the catechumenates. Interest in the mission and its work grew among the Wataita. Voi was becoming an important town, being the junction of the railway leading to Moshi. As it grew, the Fathers began visiting it, and in the thirties, the railway authorities built a small church there for the use of its employees. The church was dedicated to St Philomena and at first Mass was offered there monthly. A plot for a school and Fathers' house was obtained and Voi became a mission on its own officially in 1948 with Fr James Grennan as its first parish priest. Voi mission then began to fan out founding its own outstations. Two of these have become missions since – Sagalla, thanks to Fr Leonard Peeters in 1965 and Mwatate, opened by Fr Brian Eburn in 1974. Voi mission was also responsible for opening Voi Harambee Secondary School with Fr Sean O'Connell as its first headmaster.

TAVETA

From Bura an outstation was established at Bura Station on the main road from Voi to Moshi. The Fathers then moved westwards opening outstations

at Maktau and Taveta. Taveta was beginning to grow as a border town of some significance and the Bura Fathers turned their attention to it. Fr Laurence Nugent began visiting it in the early forties saying Mass in a house in the town. At that time the renowned Colonel Grogan of Cape to Cairo Race fame owned huge tracts of land between Taita and Taveta, much of which was converted into sisal plantations. As at the coast, the workers on these sisal estates were mostly from up-country and formed the nucleus of the Voi catechumenate and school. There was no chapel, but Grogan gave the Catholics a large store – which is still used as a chapel today. Fr Madigan approached Grogan for land and was given a plot of 500 acres at Eldoro, a rocky outcrop a few miles from the town. It became the mission site and the town became its outstation! It was dedicated to Christ the King and officially recognised as a mission in 1949. Early on however, in 1946, a trade school had been started at Eldoro. Colonel Grogan, practical man that he was, suggested to the Education Department that he was willing to finance a trade school but the government showed no interest in the project. Grogan asked Fr Madigan would the Catholic Church be interested and the answer was a very definite “yes”. When asked about the initial financing of the school, Grogan’s reply was a cheque for £1,000 which was more than enough to get started. Fr Witte who had experience of trade schools while in Nyeri during the internment of the Italian Consolata Fathers there in World War II, became the first headmaster. The trade school became well known and Frs Witte, Gerard Whelan and Gerard Foley placed many a young man on the road to a good living as they passed through their hands. A change of policy in the



First Chapel built at Makupa - 1932

Education Department in the mid-sixties led to the closure of the trade schools in favour of schools providing a purely arts orientated curriculum and Eldoro became an ordinary secondary school with Fr Peter O'Toole as its first headmaster.

All along, the need for a proper church in Taveta itself was being felt more and more so Fr Gerard Foley decided to build one, not in the town itself, but a little distance away at Timbila. This he did in 1964, and the mission centre was once more shifted, this time to Timbila. Fr Foley wished to be more among the local people, the Wa-Taveta, rather than based in the town whose Catholics were mostly from up-country. At present Timbila mission is in the care of the Apostles of Jesus, a young congregation which offered its services to Mombasa Diocese in 1989. As well as looking after Taveta and Eldoro, they have a plot at Chumvini, about thirty kilometres from the town where they have a four acre site which they hope will eventually become a mission. It is in the middle of a large irrigation scheme around which a population of about five thousand families has grown.

THE HILLS OF TAITA

The area above Bura is very often referred to simply as The Hills. We saw in our early history references to an outstation at Mgange and the difficulties the missionaries ran into there particularly over the question of the Taita Dances. In the forties the Fathers from Bura opened a "second front" and started moving up the hills, opening schools and catechumenates in the thickly populated areas of Murugua, Mwanda, Mgange, Choke and Wunangu, visiting them regularly, following the well established missionary routine. At that time there was only one road in the hills and to make their safaris somewhat easier, the Fathers turned to that sturdy sure-footed mount – the mule. The stories still in circulation about the Bura mules and their intrepid riders, particularly Frs Laurence Nugent and Thomas Roche, are legion!

LUSHANGONI (NGAMBINYI)

As the years went by and the number of Catholics and school-attending children increased it became obvious that The Hills needed its own central mission. In 1944 Chief John Mwanyolo of Mwanda location offered a five

acre plot at Ngambinyi to Fr Peadar Kelly then in charge of Bura. Because of the war years it was impossible to get materials, so building did not start until 1948. The first buildings consisted of classrooms and dormitories of a fine intermediate school and a mission house which were blessed by Archbishop David Matthew, Apostolic Delegate. He said that the new school was a sign of how well the Church was flourishing among the Wa Taita. He paid great compliments to the missionaries and thanked the local people and Chief Mwanyolo in particular for their wonderful support of the church. The mission was dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and its new church was consecrated by Bishop John J. McCarthy CSSp, Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar, in October 1955. Immediately after the consecration the first Mass in it was offered by Fr Maurice Otunga, then Secretary to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop, later Cardinal, Knox. The mission proper is usually called Lushangoni from a type of grass growing by a river which runs through the plot.

Advances came rapidly from this on in the Taita Hills. The people became gripped with an enthusiasm hitherto unknown and begged for new schools, catechumenates and missions. Where buildings were concerned, they themselves proposed new sites and brought stones and sand on their heads to the new sites. The Church of the Holy Rosary went up at Mwanda and became an outstation of St Anne's new mission at Mgange Nyika in 1960. Mgange Dawida, a mere stone's throw from Mgange Nyika, of which it was an outstation, became the parish of the Sacred Heart soon after. Churches sprang up at Murugua, Kitumbi, Wanganga and Sagasa. A beautiful plot was acquired in the middle of the town of Wundanyi, the government district headquarters. It was dedicated to St Paul by Bishop Eugene Butler CSSp in 1966 and the first Mass was offered there after the ceremony by the late Fr Isidore Onyango, the first Kenyan priest ordained for the Diocese of Mombasa. Fr Isidore, ordained in 1961, was also the first diocesan priest to die, being tragically killed in a motor accident near Taru. Also present at the opening of the Wundanyi mission was Fr Alois Ngoma who was ordained in 1963 – the second diocesan priest, and the first from Taita. It is interesting to note that the church was built by students from Taveta trade school shortly before it was closed and reopened as a secondary school.

We mentioned the enthusiasm with which the Taita people built up the Church both spiritually and materially. Two of them were singled out for

great honour by Pope Paul VI who in 1965 decorated with the medal *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Chief John Mwanyolo of Mwanda who had given the plot for Lushangoni mission, and another outstanding member of the Mwanda Community, Matthias Moka.

GIRIAMA: EARLY EXPANSION

And so we come to the last of Mombasa's mother churches – St Michael's, Mwabanyundo, Giriama. Let us recall part of the journal entry for Easter Sunday 1907 "...When God deems that the time of trial here has been sufficient, the Christianity of St Michael's will also rise from the dust to live the life of Jesus Christ". This time of trial lasted right into the nineteen twenties until, thanks particularly to Frs Albert Vittiger and Patrick O'Connor, things began to brighten up. It was they who were responsible for the push to establish solid outstations. By 1932 there were catechumenates at Tsakatune, Palakume, Katofeni, Muyuni, Bamba and Ikanga. The Fathers visited these places on safaris lasting a week at a time, their mode of transport being rickshaws! Along with these outstations stretching out in a line northwards from Mwabanyundo among the Wagiriama, Fr Patrick O'Connor also gave a lot of his time to the Waduruma people around



Bura: first bell tower



Hunting for something for the pot

Samburu. Meanwhile nearer home, Mariakani was growing and a school plot was obtained beside the railway line right in the township, the first teachers going there being from Mwabayanyundo.

A NEW START

Fr Vittiger, who had been in charge of Giriama mission from 1914 to 1932, left there for home leave in April, 1932. He was a broken, sick man and died in Paris the following June. Giriama was left without a resident priest and was looked after from Mombasa by Frs Patrick O'Connor, Gerardus Brouwer and Desmond Connaughton. A startling heading appears in the *Giriama Journal* for 27th February 1935 – the first entry since 28th April 1932, during which no journal was kept. Startling, and presumptuous, perhaps, in the light of what we have seen of the hardships attendant on the founding and growth of Giriama. It is written by the undaunted Fr Michael Witte who came to reopen the mission, and who started the *Journal* with the words: “27th February, 1935 new start of the mission... *In nomine Domini* but as we read on through his journal we wonder if it was not more *in nomine Witte!* as he seems to have considered that he had all the answers. He tells us: “...from now on the memorising of the prayers will be on the daily programme; a certain number, alas, need a prolonged instruction in order to know the very minimum essentials of religion; several don't even know the *Pater*; it is a revelation of how little Christianity has advanced in Giriama”. Fr Witte was statistically minded and kept a record of numbers at Mass, at the Sacraments, worked out averages and so on. Each days' rainfall was kept meticulously. Like most of the early missionaries, he was tough! : “...I am sick, though on my feet... how to get life into Giriama and save souls, save souls, save souls?” Fr Witte was replaced at Giriama in November 1935 and his last entry in the *Journal* reads as follows: “And so a new chapter – alas too short – is closed. I am glad to say that I loved Giriama and was most optimistic about the mission's future under the motto *Ora et Labora* (pray and work). Lord, give Giriama soon a Sisters' community! *Deo gratias!*” Giriama was not to receive its first Sisters' community until 1957.

FURTHER EXPANSION

Fr Witte's replacement was Fr Michael O'Connor whose opening entry in the journal bemoans the fact that Fr Witte “...has taken cups, plates, knives

and forks. I had neither food nor bed for my first night in Giriama!" Fr O'Connor was responsible for building the fine Church of St Michael which dominates the hillock at Mwabayanyundo. He also opened a small dispensary which met with immediate opposition from the local Anglican missionaries at Kaloleni, who were afraid of losing patients from their St Luke's Hospital. He was also a great traveller and pushed further north from Bamba and Ikanga already mentioned, taking in Madunguni, Malindi, Marafa and Gongoni. It will be noticed that this was an inland route, the reason being that at this time the coastal belt was being looked after from Makupa. Another great traveller in this country a little later was the late Fr Laurence Nugent of Tana River fame who did trojan work in Giriama country in spite of continual bad health.

In spite of this drive outwards from the mission, St Michael's itself continued to suffer from its original malaise. At the beginning of 1936 Fr O'Connor writes: "The people evidently do not like school or religion but will follow to some extent if forced; they come to Mass on Sundays really to get their wages for the previous week's work!" Again our minds go back to the Rice Christians of China. In November 1936, Fr Patrick (Pa) Wallis, a longstanding friend of Fr O'Connor's from their days together in Morogoro, "...paid a visit. He was rather surprised to see a mission of thirty years standing so poor both spiritually and materially on the East Coast". But let us not whip a dead horse. Let us turn now to the progress of the Church in the rest of Kilifi District, a progress due in no small measure, we can be sure, to the birth pangs of the mother mission at Mwabayanyundo.

MARIAKANI – TARU

We have seen that in Mariakani a plot had been acquired beside the railway line and a primary school started. It was veteran Fr Jacques Horber who nursed Mariakani in the early days, followed by Fr Enda Connolly and Fr Miguel de Sa. A new and larger plot was acquired at the fringe of the town and a church, Fathers' house and Sisters' house built on it. We have seen that a school plot had been acquired at Mariakani early on. As the township grew it was felt it merited a mission, so a large section of country hitherto under Giriama was cut off in 1952 and given to the new mission which now looked after the area stretching roughly from Mazeras to McKinnon Road. Of the Mariakani outstations, that which seemed most likely to develop was Taru, so

in 1969 a church and residence having been built, it became a mission. A team of Yugoslav roadbuilders engaged on the Mombasa-Nairobi Road built a fine complex of buildings near the mission. When they left, the site became a private school under the direction of the Loreto Sisters, who, owing to lack of personnel could not staff it, were forced to hand it over to a lay Board of Governors. Taru mission is at present manned by a priest belonging to the *Société Auxiliaire Des Missions*.

MALINDI

Malindi's connection with the Catholic Church goes back to the Portuguese times. With the end of the Portuguese presence in East Africa the Church died there and all that remained in Malindi was the small Portuguese Chapel and the Vasco da Gama Pillar. When de Courmont and Le Roy visited the Malindi area in the late eighteen eighties, there was no sign of Christianity in the area. As mentioned above, Fr Michael O'Connor made Malindi one of his chain of outstations from Giriama mission. When he visited Malindi first, he found a number of Goan Catholics there. On his visits he stayed in one of their houses and that is where Mass was first said. After Fr O'Connor, Fr John Flavin used to visit Malindi from Giriama and Fr Edmund Ryan likewise visited it from Makupa. Through Fr Flavin the present mission plot was obtained and a fund raising campaign among the Goan community got under way for money to build a church. Fr John Gannon built the house there, lack of money forcing him to economise on size with the result that the house was far too small for future needs.

Malindi Catholic mission, dedicated to St Anthony, was recognised by the Holy Ghost Mother House in 1950, but the first resident priest there, Fr Laurence Nugent, did not take up residence until October 1953. His journal opens as follows: "October 19th 1953: I left Mombasa at 1.30 p.m. on a holiday bus. Sounds magnificent, but I did not feel like one going on a holiday although I needed one. My throat was raw with ulcers and swallowing was painful and difficult. I was as weak as a kitten after my long illness..." He was given a loan of a lamp and a mattress, and "...after fixing up a shake-down in the Fathers' House I went over to Brady's Hotel and had a slow and painful meal after which I was presented with a bill for five shillings". The next day he made an arrangement with a Miss Crosbie of the Eden Rock Hotel who "...has agreed to let me have all my meals there free

until such time as I was ready to cook for myself". His first Sunday Mass had a congregation of 170 people and brought in a collection of 25 shillings and 40 cents.

Such were the humble beginnings of Malindi mission under the saintly Fr Nugent. His journal continues to describe the hardships of the early days and the lack of money "...a letter from Fr Doody stating that His Grace (Archbishop J.J. McCarthy) only agrees to 60 shillings a month for Malindi. So did the Church begin in poverty... so proceed Malindi! Malindi, famed of poets and history and holiday folders, starts on 60 shillings a month. St Francis Xavier who prayed on its beaches, pray for us!" A new addition, Madunguni, one of the Giriama outstations, now came under Malindi and we begin to get references to more schools and catechumenates such as Kakuyuni, and many others.

KILIFI

It will be remembered that it was the Fathers from Makupa and later Kongowea, who started schools and catechumenates in the Kilifi area. When Malindi was established it took Kilifi under its wing. Fr Liam O'Connor succeeded in obtaining the present mission plot in 1962 which was leased to the Church for the price of one pepper corn! The Church was dedicated to St Patrick and the mission recognised in 1965 when Fr Eamonn McSweeney took over as its first parish priest. He lived at Malindi at first until the Fathers' house was ready. After many years of missionary activity in Taita and Makupa, Fr McSweeney threw himself into the work at Kilifi and will be remembered in its many outstations for his tireless visitation on a regular basis. He spent a total of sixteen years there ending with handing over the mission to the Maryknoll Fathers in 1981. The Maryknolls have been in charge of Kilifi ever since, working as a team of Fathers and Brothers.

MARAFI

We saw that Fr Michael O'Connor's travels from Giriama had brought him as far as Marafa, some twenty five miles north of Malindi where he had established a small school. When Fr John Correia, a priest ordained for the Diocese of Mombasa and staying at Malindi with Fr Liam O'Connor, started making pastoral visits to Marafa in the sixties, he found that the school had

collapsed and all pastoral activity had ceased. In time, it was decided that Marafa could stand on its own, and in 1972 Fr James Lynch became the first parish priest. He built a cement block house and a mud and wattle church which is still being used today. Fr Gerard Foley spent some time at Marafa as did Fr Anthony Darragh who believed in developing a spirit of self reliance among the people with emphasis on agriculture and rental housing. When Fr Darragh left Marafa for Shimba Hills in 1981 he was not replaced and his projects folded up. Malindi once again had to start looking after Marafa as an outstation until the Maryknoll Fathers accepted to run it in 1987. Frs Ronald Green and Thomas Donnelly made it their first task to repair the church building and some of the rental houses which had fallen into a sorry state. The agricultural projects were revived, new outstations opened with adult catechumenates, with the result that Marafa got a new lease of life. Fr Donnelly was replaced by Fr James Roy, who looked after Marafa until 1990 when he was appointed to Kilifi, and at the time of writing Marafa has once more come under the care of Malindi.

CHONYI

Chonyi country in the Kilifi hinterland did not originally have anything to do with Giriama. Makupa had as outstations there — Vevesi, which they had to leave because of the opposition of the local witchdoctors, Kizingo and Bandarasalama. It was Fr Laurence Nugent who first started visiting Chonyi from Giriama and it is he who can be regarded as the founding father of St Teresa of the Child of Jesus mission which later became independent of Giriama with Fr Brian Carey as the first resident priest. Fr Thomas Roche who had spent many years in Taita, started an ambitious building programme for Chonyi country while parish priest of St Michael's, Giriama, in the late fifties and later on as parish priest of St Teresa's, Bandarasalama. Although Kizingo had been the first place visited by Fr Nugent, Bandarasalama became the mission centre with Kizingo an outstation along with others at Chiye, Dindiri, Kolongoni and Chasimba all of which got good buildings under Fr Roche's watchful eye. Many Holy Ghost Fathers have been associated with Chonyi, but the longest serving priest there has been Fr Miguel de Sa, a diocesan priest from the Archdiocese of Goa who has given thirty years of his priestly life to the Coast Missions and (in 1990) was still active.

KIKAMBALA

While in charge of Chonyi, Fr Roche travelled over the ridge of low lying hills which separate Chonyi from the coast and saw that Kikambala was a promising area for development. A plot had already been acquired there by Fr Madigan from Makupa in 1962 and a primary school had been built. Fr Roche began visiting it from Chonyi and decided it could become viable as a mission on its own. He built a church and small house, and St Francis Church, Kikambala came into being in 1974. From it the following outstations have been developed, each having a well built church or small chapel: Vipingo, Kireme/Bomani and Barani.

BAMBA

The last outstation of Giriama to become a mission was Bamba, one of the earliest ones. From 1968 on one of the Fathers from Giriama started going there for a few days at a time – notably Frs Michael Keating, John Power and Diarmuid Casey. It became a parish in 1971 and Fr Keating took over as parish priest. Such former outstations of Giriama as Viragoni, Palakumi, Vitengenji now came under the care of Bamba. Bamba is in the middle of a very arid part of the country and is a particularly hard mission. In 1990 there was no resident priest there once again but was visited from Giriama then run by a member of the Congregation of the Apostles of Jesus.

And so we come to the end of our grand tour of the missions which sprang from the humble and difficult beginnings of St Michael's, Mwabayanyundo. The poverty of the land and therefore of the people, the unwelcoming climate, the age-old traditions of the Mijikenda people all militate against a rich and plentiful harvest. Yet, like St Paul, it behoves the priest, be he missionary or local diocesan, to preach Christ in season, out of season until all come to the knowledge of the One True God. That still goes on.

RETURN TO THE TANA RIVER

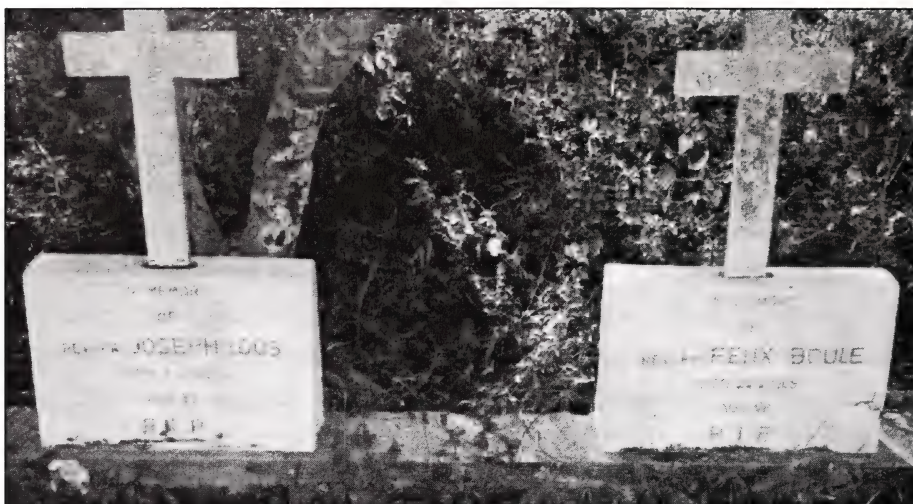
We left our account of the first ill-fated attempt to establish a mission on the Tana River with the abandoning of the project, the return to Zanzibar and the deaths of Fr Charles Gommenginger and Brother Acheul Dreyer there. Plans to make a second attempt to found a Tana River Mission were made in 1914 but

with the outbreak of the war they came to nothing due to the lack of personnel. The war was carried to East Africa and as many of the missionaries in British East Africa were from Alsace, then German territory, they were interned.

Since the initiative for the final and successful attempt at Catholic missionary activity in the Tana River area came from a delegation of Methodists, it is useful to have a look at the history of the Protestant missions there. This history presents us with a see-saw affair between the German Lutherans of the Neukirchen with their headquarters at Witu under the protection of the German Consular Agency there, and the British Methodists whose principal missions were at Ngao originally, and Golbanti. The Methodists had come in response to a plea from the Galla for God Movement instigated in England in the 1860's by two Methodist pioneers, Rev. Wakeman and Rev. New. There were also Swedish Lutherans at Kulesa but, when their mission was destroyed in an attack by Somalis, they withdrew from the Tana River completely. Later on the Methodists withdrew and the German Neukirchen Lutherans had the field to themselves until 1914. The First World War sounded the death knell for them through internment and after the war the Methodists once again appeared and started building up the missions which had fallen into disuse. Nothing daunted, however, the determined Germans returned and became more numerous than the Methodists. This was in 1927 and they held centre stage till the Second World War put an end to the German presence in the Tana once and for all, and the Methodists took over again.

All was not rosy in the Methodist garden, however. The constant coming and going of British missionaries from their headquarters at Ribe, far away near Mombasa (not until 1951 was it agreed that the Tana River Church should be administered from Ngao); complaints about the lack of financial support for local pastors and the poor condition of mission schools – such problems sowed the seeds of discontent among the faithful. In 1954, two villages, Wema and Wenje, revolted and approached the Christian Council of Kenya, forerunner of the present National Christian Council of Kenya, to send them Protestant missionaries from another denomination. They were told that the Tana River was entrusted to the Methodists and the Methodists alone. As a last resort, they turned to the Catholic Church in spite of their traditional distrust of the Romans who follow the “woman”.

In 1954 Ananiah Theophile from Wema was sent as an envoy to invite the Catholics. Unknowingly he bypassed the infant mission at Malindi where Fr Laurence Nugent was stationed and travelled to St Michael's, Giriama via



THE FIRST HOLY GHOST FATHERS TO DIE IN MOMBASA

Fr. Felix Boule, 1909, died of blackwater fever

Fr. Joseph Loos, 1913, died of snakebite

Mombasa. Undeterred at finding the Father at Giriama away on a few days' safari, and learning that there was a priest at Malindi, Theophile completed the circuit and presented himself to Fr Laurence Nugent. We read in Fr Nugent's journal: "19.6.1954: A member of the Pokomo tribe called today with a letter from the people of Wema asking for the Catholic mission to come in the name



HOLY GHOST FATHERS BURIED AT GIRIAMA

L. – R: Frs Frank Whitney, Joseph Loos, Felix Boule, Laurence Nugent, Hugh Redmond (headstone only), Fr Redmond is buried at Suez where he died on journey home. Not in photo: Fr. Jacques Horber.

of Christ and take charge of their spiritual needs”. Three days later he writes that Archbishop McCarthy, dropping into Malindi for a few days and being given the letter to read announced solemnly: “Go and see what you can do for them”. The arrival of the request from the people at Wema and His Grace’s blessing on the project seemed like manna from heaven to Fr Laurence. “All this talk about the difficulty of opening a mission amongst the Wapokomo”, he writes, “seems to have been in vain – now the door has opened of its own accord”.

On July 5th Fr Laurence paid his first visit to Wema. His entry from the *Malindi Journal* reads like a passage from the *Acts of the Apostles* describing one of St Paul’s journeys. “A Public Works Department lorry picked me up early and took some boys, myself and a safari kit to Garsen... We were met there by Ananiah Theophile, Sylvanus, Matalisa, headman of the village, and Twonane. They quickly set to transferring everything from the lorry to the *mau*, as they call their long dug-outs. The river was up, and in order to get to Wema, eight miles by road, we had to go sailing slowly up the river thinking great thoughts that here were the Wapokomo... now opening their doors to Rome. As we went slowly along the water I thought of the words of St Paul that eight people were saved by water and so we are saved by water in baptism, and so now salvation is coming to Wapokomo by water (actually the reference to the eight people – Noah and his family – is in Peter: 3:20). *Wema* means good and peculiarly, too, the location is called *Salama* which means safe. Let’s hope that the new church will be seen by all as a good and safe refuge.

“The Totos and I said the rosary continually on the journey. The elders sang their hymns ... About half an hour’s journey from Wema, Ananiah left the dug-out and made straight for the village on foot which is much quicker than by *mau*, with the result that when we reached Wema the populace, men, women and children, lined the riverbank singing hymns in greeting. The crucifix from the Mass kit was on top of the baggage... it quickly caught their eye, and though they had never seen one before they readily recognised *Bwana Yesu*. So, taking the crucifix in my hands I landed on the mud wharf and proceeded to the village accompanied by the people who kept on singing hymns”.

Fr Nugent was keen to say Mass on the very day of his arrival but the only building large enough was the former church used for the Methodist services. He was not happy about saying Mass there but was won over by the fact that it had been built by the villagers themselves without any help “financial or material from any mission”, thus making it neutral territory, and moreover

“...the elders gave me to understand that all the villagers were now Catholic and clamoured loudly that the service should be held in their church”. Strangely enough, Fr Nugent gives no account of the attendance at Mass or the reaction of the people to it. His next entry is his surprise to learn that the decision to invite the Catholics had not been unanimous and that a group had left for Ngao to report the matter to the Methodists there, the biggest complaint being that the Methodist Church had been used by the Romans without any consultation with the authorities at Ngao. This turned out to be a major issue and Fr Nugent became the object of written and verbal tirades. From Ngao Reverend Mr Bastion wrote to Fr Nugent telling him that “...never in his long missionary career had he come across such an impertinent action as mine, calling on a village of dissidents and trouble makers before consulting with Ngao mission and using their church for my ‘Baraza’”. To make matters worse, poor Fr Laurence came under fire from Archbishop McCarthy “...who said he was annoyed with me about using the church”. The District Commissioner at Kipini, a Catholic, however, stood up for Fr Laurence and said that the church building belonged to the people. He further sent a circular letter to all the chiefs in the area stating that if any village turned over completely to the Catholic Church, then the village church belonged to the Catholics; however, if all the villagers did not turn, then the Catholics were to build their own. The Wema Catholics had already decided to build their own church which they did on a plot donated to the mission. Fr Nugent thought it a good site although “...mosquitoes are going to be troublesome here, but if the house is built well with proper precautions it ought to be possible to live comfortably enough at Wema. It will always be possible to have a good *shamba* (farm), and the river passes a few yards away so water ought to be no difficulty”. If Fr Laurence had lived to hear of the devastation of Wema during the floods of 1961, he would probably have retracted those last few words.

A CALL FROM WENJE – THE GOOD NEWS SPREADS

Fr Nugent remarks that he heard one of the Wema villagers sum up the Catholic faith in these words: *Hii ndiyo dini sawa sawa*, which could be loosely translated: “This religion has the goods!” Word spread and in September a delegation came from Wenje, a village fifty miles upstream “...asking for Rome to take over their village”. Fr Nugent had left on a safari to visit the Mau Mau Camps at Hola and Lamu and it was not until the

following month that he got the message on his return to Wema. It must be remembered that during this time, Fr Nugent was resident at Malindi which meant that he was, in spite of ill health, constantly on the go. He visited Wenje on October 13th bringing with him the faithful Ananiah and Sylvanus. "...It is a dry and healthy village in comparison with Wema. We ought to have a mission here also. The chief and people have become staunch supporters of Rome. A few have held back but they are causing no trouble. A site for a new church and house was chosen".

Fr Nugent's last entry in his journal for Malindi mission is that of December 6th 1954. The next entry is that of Fr Edmund Ryan who was appointed to Malindi after Fr Nugent's death on October 24th 1955. No reason is given for the lacuna, but he was probably unable to write due to his failing health leading to exhaustion. He was brought to Mombasa Hospital a week before he died, suffering from a liver infection. He seemed to rally in hospital but in the early hours of the morning of the 25th he suffered from a haemorrhage and died. Fr Ryan takes up the journal describing Fr Laurence's last illness and death with the words: "...Fr Nugent's death, like his life, was calm and holy He left behind him a reputation for simplicity, gentleness, zeal and holiness. Because of his austere life some claimed that he died from malnutrition. It is true that very few signs of comfort were to be found in his small, badly furnished house".

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Fr Edmund Ryan pays the following tribute to Fr Nugent in the Malindi Journal: "Fr Nugent was solely responsible for entering the Tana River District. This entry was a great achievement". If Fr Nugent can be called the apostle of the Tana River, then Fr Ryan can certainly be called his co-apostle. Fr Ryan with characteristic zest and zeal, took up the reins, and for the next ten years looked after the Wapokomo. From 1955 to 1959 he visited Wema and Wenje regularly from Malindi, as well as Lamu and Hola. Fr Ryan arrived back from home leave in November 1958 and was the obvious choice as the first parish priest of Wema. He arrived there on December 10th and received a great welcome from the villagers. He got a shock, however, when he saw the condition of his house! In his *Tana River Journal* he writes: "The house which was under construction depending on the distant control of the Procurator at Mombasa was very unfinished. What was built was imperfectly



Father's house - early this century at Giriama Catholic Mission: Mwabayanyundo

done. A low mixture of cement with the inferior local sand was used. Cracked floors which were dug up had yet to be replaced. The water tank was not erected. Plumbing and mosquito proofing of the house is still unfinished". And so, finding himself in conditions reminiscent of the early pioneers, Fr Ryan returned to Mombasa to report on them.

That was not the end of his woes. A whole chapter could be devoted to what he went through during the floods of 1961. He has written an account of his experiences from which we give a few quotations: "...the firm trust in God's mercy and providence which the Wapokomo possessed was to provide them with a strong support in the disastrous deluge that began in September and surpassed anything that living memory could recall. In less than a week, miles and miles of countryside were under water. Ten villages were submerged and thousands were homeless. Thirteen people perished in the race before the oncoming waters... There was a short respite with the waters receding slightly; food was being dropped from R.A.F. planes, and the children were thriving... soon, however, warnings of more floods were coming over the radio... the November short rains were beginning, and over 48" of rain had fallen in a month in Meru, one of the catchment areas of the Tana... the river at Garissa had risen to ten inches higher than the normal flood level... it was realised that the mission would be cut off from all motor traffic for at least six months... how one sighs for a river launch since the only permanent highway here is the Tana River..." A river launch was



St. Michael's Church, Giriama: 1936/ 37

supplied by the Government during the lesser floods of 1962, and eventually the mission obtained its own launch.

“Wema’s grimmest ordeal began in mid-November. The river had begun to rise and local showers increased in frequency and strength... there was less than half an acre of dry land all round and the Fathers’ and Sisters’ houses were islands in the water. I was awakened at 4.00 a.m. by the news that the river was dangerously high and that the men were out since 2.00 a.m. trying with little success to seal it off. They would make an all out attempt when morning dawned. I remember waiting on the verandah in the dark just before dawn, watching the skies for a hint of the first light of day. After about four hours of magnificent work by the entire village, the breaches were adequately sealed off. It was excellent teamwork... clamour and shouting served as oil for the smooth working of the machine. A rugby pack or huntsmen crying “Tally Ho” act in a similar fashion... as the work approaches a successful end, the shouting gives way to harmonious singing and hand-clapping. Someone intones the chorus: *Mali ya Baba* ...the women swing and dance as they pass the dripping sods... the work speeds rapidly to a hilarious conclusion... The following night the waters breached the banks once more and this time it seemed as if the whole village would be destroyed.

“I was awakened at 2.45. My callers were on their way to the Sisters so that we could all stand together until the end. Once again the villagers repeated the work of stemming the water and barely succeeded... All that



Makupa Primary School, Mombasa

week was a trying period; there were the restless nights, the frequent showers, the ebb and flow of the water level... Things have improved now although the levels are still high, they are receding, showing shrubs and grass soiled with brown silt. Oozing squelching mud is welcome under our feet once more. As I write, two people glide smoothly through the long grass punting their fast moving canoe in view of the house. The sun is shining, and I trust the worst is over”.

Doubtless during this long ordeal, more was to follow in 1962, Fr Ryan's



Saint Mary's Seminary, Kwale - 1960

thoughts must have often turned to his fellow Holy Ghost pioneers, Fr Gommenginger and Brother Acheul who suffered even worse seventy years previously at the treachery of the Tana. The firm trust in God's mercy and providence which Fr Ryan attributes to the Wapokomo was shared by himself.

Having weathered the storm, both physically and spiritually, Wema rose like the phoenix to a new life. And that life begot further new life. In 1962 another village became Catholic and renamed itself *Emmaus*. Owing to the Shifta menace, Wema had to be closed temporarily in 1964, but was reopened in 1965 when Garsen and Hola became outstations. Work progressed and until 1976 the Holy Ghost Fathers built up the Church in that area which had first welcomed members of their congregation. In 1976 the Holy Ghost Fathers were called on to hand over their hard-won Tana River mission to the care of another missionary group. That year the Prefecture of Garissa was set up and confided to the care of the Capuchin Fathers from Malta. Garissa became a diocese in 1984 and, as is the case in all of Kenya's eighteen dioceses in 1990, continues to grow.

SOURCES

Malindi Journal

Tana River Journal

Makupa, Kichaka Simba and Malindi Journals

Notes provided by Frs Edmund Ryan CSSp and Thomas Roche CSSp

Notes on the 1961-62 Floods by Fr Edmund Ryan CSSp

CHAPTER VI

Co-workers – The Missionary Sisters

THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY

From the beginning of Christianity there have been many women like those of the Gospel who, in their role of religious sisters, have ministered to the community. The Holy Ghost Fathers saw from the start the immense contribution Sisters could make to the missionary effort particularly in the fields of medicine, education and social work. The Congregation of Holy Ghost Sisters was founded in France in the early years of the Congregation's history. Coming nearer to Africa, Fr Frederick le Vasseur founded the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary on the island of Reunion. When the little pioneering band under Fr Fava landed in Zanzibar on Christmas Eve 1860, there were six members of this congregation in the group. Thanks to the warm welcome given them by Said Majid, the Sisters were given a separate plot from the mission for a hospital. This hospital became famous because of the apostolic zeal and professional excellence of the sisters. When Monsignor de Courmont started looking for a foothold in Mombasa, he suggested to George McKinnon, head of the Imperial British East Africa Company that the Daughters of Mary could open a hospital on the island. Being informed that the Company intended building its own hospital, de Courmont promptly offered the Sisters to work in it. His appeal was backed up by the Governor of Zanzibar who lavished praise on the Fathers of the French mission and the Sisters' devotion to the sick. When Mombasa mission was established the Daughters of Mary came and worked in the government hospital.

SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH OF CLUNY

The Daughters of Mary left Mombasa in 1897. No reason for their departure is given in the journals. They were replaced by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny, another group of nursing Sisters. They built their own hospital along the seafront. It still exists today as the administration block of Mombasa Hospital, and the casuarina trees they planted along the ocean front add to the beautiful view from the present hospital verandahs. The Saint Joseph of Cluny Sisters left Mombasa in 1914, the reason for their departure being given as their inability to supply sufficient English speaking Sisters. The *General Bulletin* of the Holy Ghost Fathers remarks: "...we then knocked on the doors of different congregations of Sisters, all of whom were full of good will and zeal, but none of whom felt they were suited to the work we proposed to them".

CONGREGATION OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

While the Cluny Sisters were still in Mombasa two other congregations of Sisters had arrived – this time principally for the field of girls’ education. The first were those of the Congregation of the Precious Blood, the pioneering contingent being composed of Srs Virginia who came from German East Africa, Lamberta and Hermenegildis who came out fresh from Germany. This was in February 1909 and their first mission was Bura, Taita where, they report, their assignment was “...to teach, aid the sick and work in house and garden”. Sr Lamberta became somewhat of a legend among the Wataita. She was “...a zealous missionary, teacher and nurse giving religious instructions and preparing catechumens for the reception of the Sacraments. She also climbed up and down the steep Taita Hills visiting the sick in their homes and making personal contact with the people around”. She wore herself out and died on Christmas Day 1910. She was buried near a huge tree away from the Sisters’ house, but apparently did not like her final resting place. Tradition has it that she appeared to the Vicar Apostolic and asked him to have her reburied beside the house. Her request was granted after which she left the Monsignor alone, although it is said she appeared to others as well.

World War I sadly interrupted the missionary activities of the Sisters. Soon after the outbreak of the war in Europe, Taita – Taveta became a battleground between the British and the Germans. The Sisters were falsely accused of harbouring German escapees in the convent. It is said that their accuser, a Protestant missionary in Taita, was hoping to get hold of the mission land. The result was that the Sisters were marched to Mombasa. “Worn out by lack of water and food, burning heat and biting insects”, we are told, “they arrived at Mombasa carrying deadly diseases to which all three of them succumbed within a few months of their arrival”. With the burial in Mbaraki Cemetery, Mombasa, of Sisters Hermenegildis, Eustacia and Genesai, the first phase of the Precious Blood Sisters’ activity in Mombasa ended.

The second group of Sisters returned in 1925 and got down to work immediately beginning with a dispensary and school for religious instruction and reading lessons. The year 1928 saw the arrival of the dynamic Sister Juditha who until her retirement did so much for Bura in the fields of girls’ secondary education and teacher training. In 1935 Sister Amadea arrived, another Sister to whom Bura owes so much – principally in that she was given the responsibility of nursing the infant diocesan Congregation of St

Joseph and bringing it to the stage where it could look after itself. Another outstanding missionary among the early Sisters was Sister Adelberta who set Bura Girls' High School on a firm footing during her years of headmistressship from 1952 to 1964.

When the St. Joseph Mukasa catechetical training centre was opened in Bura in 1967, the Precious Blood Sisters were there at hand to help with their expertise. The trainees had their families with them and the Sisters looked after the women and children, giving them religious instruction as well as practical guidance, cooking, sewing, hygiene and childcare. The Sisters, however, did not confine themselves to the boundaries of Bura mission but became involved in NARET (National Religious Education Teachers' Association) and in work as religious education advisers. They travelled around the Taita Hills visiting schools, organising seminars and workshops and helping the teachers in every way, both by teaching and encouragement.

Looking back on the contribution of the Precious Blood Sisters to the missionary effort in Mombasa it is sad to learn that owing to lack of personnel they have left Bura. Their influence remains on in the presence of the diocesan St Joseph Sisters, the congregation they helped to found (as we shall see in the next chapter), nourish and bring to maturity. Their own brief history provided for this publication ends with these words: "Grown as a branch of the Precious Blood Sisters, the redemptive power of the Precious Blood is now flowing through the prayer, sacrifice and service of the St Joseph Sisters as a blessing for their fellow Africans in Mombasa, Nairobi and Kitui".

THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA

The White Sisters, or to give them their official title: The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, were originally founded in 1869 in Algeria by Cardinal Lavigerie to work among the Muslims of North Africa. As their congregation grew they expanded their apostolate elsewhere in Africa. Their first Sisters arrived in Mombasa on May 28th 1909, the pioneers being Sisters Mary St. Victor, Mary Vianney and Mary St. Romuald from France and Canada. They proposed as their apostolate: "...to begin an inter-racial school and dispensary in the grounds of the Holy Ghost Mission". A fine convent was built for them beside the original mission church. This building, later becoming an office block for the well known Mombasa firm of Baumann &

Company, held a commanding site along Mombasa's main road until it was demolished to make room for Ambalal House. While waiting for their convent to be ready the Sisters lived at the mission house, they and the Fathers having separate staircases at opposite ends of the verandah. This was the beginning of the close cooperation between the two groups with the Sisters always at hand to involve themselves in parish projects.

Ali bin Salim, the influential son of the Liwali and friend of the Fathers and Sisters, was responsible for the latter getting the site of their present day convent to which they moved in 1912. Today the fine Sisters' residence, built like the Fathers' mission house in the typical French missionary style of the time (thick walls and a fine wide verandah all around thus ensuring maximum coolness), stands at the roundabout joining Nyerere Avenue and Dedan Kimathi Road, but in those days it stood in the middle of bush country. At that time the railway almost ran past the door and the Sisters succeeded in getting the Railway Company to let the trains stop there to drop and pick up children coming to their little school. This school was called The White Sisters' Convent School and remained so until it was changed to Star of the Sea School in 1954 when the foundation of the present building was laid.

Although the Missionary Sisters of our Lady of Africa have always been associated first and foremost with the education of girls through their input into Star of the Sea School, their work in Mombasa has not been confined to it alone. Among the early Sisters, Sister Hermina is remembered for her work in the primary school originally on the site of the present railway station and later at Makupa Mission. She also gave a lot of her time, as did the other Sisters, to visiting patients in the Makadara (now Mombasa) Hospital. In addition to hospital visitation, the Sisters had their own small dispensary on the site of present day Pandya Memorial Clinic. Returning to the field of education we find the Sisters taking up the running of Marycliff Primary School – a school which Sisters Annette and Vivien put on its feet. Nor must we forget how they helped to start the Mama Ngina Hostel for Girls (now a secondary school) of which Sister Zita was one of the founding matrons.

As regards specifically religious education, in latter years the Sisters turned their attention to the teachers of religion in primary schools. In 1983 Sisters Margaret and Honor initiated the Religious Education Resource Centre to serve the needs of religious education throughout the diocese. Over the years over seven hundred teachers followed the REAP courses provided by the Centre. This work is now being continued by a diocesan catechetical team

led by Sister Berry Chari of the Sisters of St Joseph, thus leaving Sister Maggi, the last of the founding group to be associated with the Centre, free to devote herself to secretarial and administrative preparations for the Centenary celebrations.

Apart from their untiring dedication to education both secular and religious, the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa have given themselves to other forms of the apostolate over the years in and around Mombasa. In the thirties when Mombasa received floods of migrant upcountry workers, the Sisters started looking after their womenfolk, teaching them the basics of home economy. These small beginnings eventually developed into the formation of *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* groups which Sisters Catherine and Rosa organised in Kongowea, Mtongwe, Changamwe and Majengo. Branching out into other apostolic spheres, Sister Rose St Marie created a new work of Savings and Credit Unions along the coast. Sister Lea started a movement called *Slowodi* to help women in distress – a work which today is being carried on by Sister Ursula of the Sisters of St Joseph.

In all the above ventures, the Sisters of Our Lady of Africa have left the stamp of perfection and devotion on their work and on those people with whom they have come into contact. And this is true not only of Catholics or even Christians alone, but of the many Mombasa Muslim and Hindu girls and women who have passed through their hands. Many of these owed their success in later life to the groundwork in secular, moral and religious training they received particularly in Star of the Sea School. They remember with gratitude and fondness such stalwarts as Sisters Oliver and Bernadette, appreciated especially for their musical talents; Sister Wiro the mathematics wizard, scripture teacher to students, both boys and girls of all faiths, who used to come for after class tuition; Cecilia Mary who has successfully introduced many young Mombasa girls to the beautiful world of classical piano music. These are but a few of the many Sisters over the eighty years since their arrival who have helped the Star of the Sea shine bright in the sky over Mombasa.

Truly Mombasa owes a great debt to these Sisters. As the number of the old guard grows less and as their congregation grows more international in character, they turn their eyes with unbounded hope to their younger Sisters to continue their work as they recall the words of their founder: "The missionaries should be mainly initiators, for the lasting work has to be done by the Africans themselves when they become Christians and apostles".

THE SISTERS OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (LORETO SISTERS)

As far back as 1903, a Sister who was to have an immense impact on the education of girls in Kenya arrived in Nairobi. She was Sister Mary Borgia O'Shaughnessy, the forerunner of a veritable army of Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or Loreto Sisters as they are commonly known. She and Sister Catherine Beauvais came at the request of the Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar, Monsignor Allegeyer to "...open a highclass boarding school for girls". These would have been the daughters of Europeans settled or working in Kenya, since in those days, boarding schools for Africans, boys or girls, were as yet unheard of. Sister Borgia, having sized up the situation in Nairobi decided that there was no work for her Sisters there "...congruous to the times". She felt that the real need at St Austin's mission, opened only four years previously, was for nursing Sisters which was not within the scope of the Loreto Sisters' vocation.

In 1913 Monsignor Allegeyer made another appeal to the Irish Sisters' headquarters at Rathfarnham, Dublin. He had studied at Blackrock College and had become a member of the Irish Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers, so he knew the work the Loreto Sisters were doing in Ireland for girls' education and he wanted them for his Vicariate. It was not until 1920 however, that Sister Borgia again arrived in Nairobi at the request of Monsignor John Neville, the first Irish Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar. The Sisters she brought with her were from the Loreto Indian Province. From the humble beginnings of their first little school in Msongari, Nairobi, which opened on November 11th 1920 "...with seventeen pupils, one old worn out blackboard, and three wallmaps almost eaten away by insect... the history of the Loreto Sisters in Kenya has been one of phenomenal growth and success. They witnessed the opening of school after school around the country – Eastleigh (the Sisters living in Msongari used to travel to school every day in a butcher's van), Nairobi Parochial School, Eldoret, Limuru, Mombasa (A Loreto by the Sea), Valley Road, Matunda, Kiambu Teacher Training College, Changamwe, Taru and Nakuru.

The pioneering group for the Loreto by the Sea at Mombasa was led by the stalwart Sister Borgia, arriving on December 19th 1936 accompanied by Sisters Raphael Gordon and Imelda Griffin. They took possession of their first convent on Mji Mpya Road, "...off Salim Road South", which today is

Nyerere Avenue. The house (today St Anne's High School) had been acquired the previous year thanks to a bequest of money left to Sister Borgia by a relative in Ireland.

The aims of the Loreto sisters are set out as follows in a booklet they published on the occasion of their Golden Jubilee in Mombasa:

To work for the progress of the (Mombasa) people in Christian living and doctrine.

As much as possible to involve the pupils in the task of their own education and development.

To foster in the pupils a sense of their dignity and to assist them to be reflective, thus enabling them to make right decisions.

To inculcate in the pupils a desire to serve and to provide opportunities for them to put this desire into action.

To cooperate with parents and to seek their cooperation in fostering in the pupils a right sense of values, a loyalty to family, church, school and country.

Beyond the confines of the school compound, the Sisters also aimed at making contact with many other people in need of enlightenment and help in their day to day struggle for a livelihood and in search of a meaning in life. Loreto were blessed in having in Sister Borgia a woman of exceptional talents and virtues. She had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, a great sense of the role of a Sister as a moral support to the priest, a great feeling for the spiritual and material plight of the ordinary people with whom she came into contact, and a special sympathy for and attachment to the sick. She also had that virtue so necessary to all superiors – a great sense of humour which tided her and her companions over the difficulties of the early years.

The Loreto Sisters were originally invited to Kenya to educate the daughters of the expatriate community and at first their pupils, like those of many of Kenya's first boarding schools, were Europeans. However, they allowed themselves to be moved by the wind of change sweeping across colonial Africa including Kenya and in the early sixties they began preparing for what they call "...the quiet revolution of integrating other races into their schools". It was obvious that the original school on Mji Mpya road would be too small for the explosive intake of African children expected after

Independence. With this increase of pupils in mind Sister Teresina Sheehan left no stone unturned until she had acquired the large plot on which stands the present day convent and magnificent school on Kaunda Avenue. At the moment it is a mixed primary school and there are great hopes that a plot for a secondary school close by will be acquired, thus ensuring the pupils of a straight run from pre-standard one up to form four along the unique lines of Loreto education. Sister Borgia did not live to see the new school take shape, "...but her spirit continued to live on in Sisters Teresina, Rosario, Dorothea, Carmel, Louis and Breid who formed the first Loreto Community at Kaunda Avenue. They have been described as persons with "hearts to love and wills to serve" .

In 1968, in keeping with their policy of Africanising their schools, the Loreto Sisters took over the newly built diocesan private school, St Charles Lwanga Secondary in Changamwe. This was a brave step as it was the first secondary school in that area of low income workers and showed the determination of the Sisters to accept new challenges in their educational apostolate. The pioneer was Sister Paula Doolin and with the good foundations she laid the school has gone from strength to strength. The present headmistress, Sister Elizabeth White, says of the school that "...the aim of the education offered is and has been as wide based as possible in order to encourage the development of the whole person of each student" – which indeed is the core of all Loreto education. It has already been noted that with the coming of industrialisation to Mombasa the Changamwe area experienced a minor population explosion. The great majority of the pupils at St Charles Lwanga are the children of these upcountry migrant workers. The school is a blessing for such people since the Sisters try to keep the school as low-cost as possible. Another blessing is that the intake is normally of students who do not qualify for places in government schools and "...yet are potentially capable of benefiting from a secondary education in as genuinely an atmosphere of Christianity as possible". Moreover, "...the school is) pioneering an appreciation of opportunities for developing the head and the hand relevant to experiences that are available".

In 1971, the Mombasa Loreto Sisters spread their wings further afield – this time to the Waduruma people in the heart of the Taru semi-desert area halfway between Mombasa and Voi. While building a section of the Mombasa – Nairobi tarmac road a group of Yugoslav contractors had built a fine complex of wooden buildings as their headquarters at Taru. On their

departure, the local elders bought the buildings and approached the Catholic Church to open a *Harambee* (local community) secondary school. The Loreto Sisters were approached to undertake the running of this school. At that moment "...the Loreto Sisters wished to commemorate the one hundred and fifty years of their foundation in Ireland, so they readily accepted the invitation to run the school to recall the spirit of their own small beginnings in Ireland".

Sisters Margarita Burke and Teresina Sheehan got the school going, ably assisted, among others, by Rocky Mchinga already mentioned in our chapter on Giriama mission "...a past pupil of the Catholic school in Kabaa who had captured much of his former headmaster Fr Witte's philosophy of education and carried it to the Taru Committee Meetings". By 1978 the school was on a firm footing with a government grading and a number of government teachers on the staff, and the Sisters decided to retire. "...However the challenge has been taken up by the people of the desert".

Mombasa, Changamwe, Taru – the latter two are at present at an interim stage on the way to becoming public schools – have showered countless blessings on the many pupils who have been fortunate enough to pass through the caring hands of these Sisters. As has been said about the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, these pupils number among them many non-Catholics and non-Christians who remember the Sisters fondly and today bear the Loreto stamp on their characters wherever they are found in Kenya.

Emphasis has been placed on the fact that Loreto education is not aimed at the head only, as is sadly the case in many Kenya schools today, but also at the soul, the heart, the hands – in a word at the whole person. The Loreto Sisters sum up their apostolate as follows: " 'That they may have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10). This is the chief concern of our Sisters. Therefore formation of the whole person, in which care of the faith through education of youth and any means suitable to the times, is our apostolate".

That this apostolate will continue in Kenya as the numbers of the Irish Sisters decreases is assured by the number and quality of young Kenyan women joining the Congregation. To ensure that the Loreto charism would take firm root in Kenya soil, the Provincial Superior negotiated the opening of a noviceship in Nairobi. This was in February 1965 and as usual in such undertakings the beginnings were humble. Two past pupils of Loreto schools, Lwanga Katela and Ephigenia Gachiri heard the call to follow Christ and

started their long road to final profession under the wise guidance of Sister Fidelis Shiel who was the first mistress of novices. The year 1990 saw the celebration of the silver jubilee of these two Kenya pioneers, shared with great joy by their compatriots in the Congregation – four other finally professed Sisters, eighteen with temporary vows and six novices. Placed under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, their patron, the Loreto Sisters look forward in hope to their future.

THE CONSOLATA SISTERS

The Consolata Fathers were the second group of missionary priests to make their way up country from Mombasa in 1902. When they got settled in to their early missions around Nyeri they were followed by their fellow Sisters of the Consolata Congregation who like the Fathers started their work in Nyeri, later expanding it to Meru, Embu, Murang'a and finally in the late sixties to Marsabit. The main goal of the Consolata Sisters is to evangelise, bringing Christianity among the not-yet-evangelised. They witness to the teachings of the Gospel through nursing, teaching and socio-human development. At first they also devoted themselves temporarily to physically disabled children, and to the deaf, the dumb and the blind. Later on they handed over the institutions they had started for these charitable works to others Sisters or lay missionaries.

The Consolata Sisters arrived in Mombasa in 1968 and opened their Stella Maris House by the seashore at Shelly Beach. The pioneers were Sisters Luisalba, Odilia, Martina and the late Sister Sandra. The aim of their house was to give hospitality to Sisters arriving from Italy, as a rest house for their own sisters and for those of other congregations in need of a break from their work and finally to make a contribution to the local church. With this last aim in view the Sisters built a fine dispensary to which people from the whole coast come in preference to their own local hospitals and dispensaries. In addition they built a nursery school which also serves as a chapel for Sunday Mass. One of the Sisters teaches catechism to the local children, preparing them for reception of the Sacraments while a second teaches the pastoral programme in the nearby primary schools. Since 1984 the Sisters have a second house at the Likoni-Mtongwe Parish where they are involved in nursery school supervision, promotion of health by preventive and curative care together with family catechesis and apostolic work among the youth.

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

The Little Sisters of the Poor, faithful to the original charism of their foundress, Blessed Jeanne Jugan (1792-1879), are dedicated to the service of the elderly poor. Their congregation, founded at Saint Servan, France, in 1839, has spread to thirty countries around the world. Their mission is one of humble service to the aged poor. They undertake to feed, clothe and house the elderly who have no one to do so for them, giving them the security of a home and care until the moment of death. In their homes for the aged poor various activities are organised to promote the spiritual, mental and physical health of the residents.

In 1961 the Bishop of Mombasa, Bishop Eugene Butler CSSp, invited the Sisters to open a home in Mombasa. The rapid transition from a traditional to a quickly developing society had given rise to social problems hitherto unknown in Africa, and there was an alarming increase in the number of elderly people, homeless, alone, without a supporting family, who found that they had to fend for themselves and who were living from day to day. The Sisters answered Mombasa's call and the first group of Little Sisters arrived on June 7th 1969. It was a truly international group composed of Sisters Margaret from Ireland, Rita from Scotland and Marie Aimée from India. For the first six weeks they experienced the warm hospitality of the Sisters of Our Lady of Africa until they were ready to occupy their first home – an old rented house on the Kilindini Road. Within a week they welcomed their first resident, an elderly man from Bura. In December 1971 a property in Tudor was acquired on which the present *Nyumba ya Wazee* was built with accommodation for seventy five men and women. The completed project was blessed by Cardinal Otunga on May 24th 1974.

As with the other missionary congregations, the Little Sisters of the Poor have been appealing to young Kenyan women to answer the call of their special vocation to the elderly poor, and it is noteworthy that of the first two African Sisters to take their vows, one is from Mombasa. At the moment there are four such Sisters (one with final vows), two postulants and five aspirants. No doubt numbers will increase, adding to the present seven of the Mombasa Home and five of the newly opened one in Nairobi. A characteristic of the mission of the Little Sisters of the Poor is a total confidence in Divine Providence. This confidence is rewarded by the generous donations, gifts and subscriptions showered on the Sisters by

Mombasa's grateful people of all races and creeds. Another by-product of this all-powerful confidence is the joy that radiates from the overworked Sisters who are always on call, a joy shared by their residents. In their immaculately kept house and compound one truly finds the peace and tranquillity of *A Monastery Garden*.

THE IRISH SISTERS OF MERCY

We conclude this chapter on the missionary Sisters who have worked in Mombasa with the Carlow Mercy Sisters from Ireland who, in the persons of Sisters Mary, Francis and Ann taught for a number of years in the Junior Seminary, Kwale. In their few short years there, they were a source of inspiration to all in the compound – pupils, teachers and Sisters of St Joseph with whom Sister Mary lived until their own house was ready. Unfortunately that old “bugbear” of lack of personnel was once again responsible for their withdrawal, and their place has now been taken by lay staff.

We have seen a definite pattern throughout the life and work of these valiant missionary Sisters regardless of their different congregations or nationalities. They came, they planted, they reaped; they showed the way and then called on others, on the women of Kenya they had grown to love, to follow the same call that they had heard and followed. This call has been answered, and the founding Sisters in their wisdom are allowing their Kenyan children to grow in an African, a Kenyan way, thus not stifling but rather strengthening their own inborn characters and talents, building thereby a firm foundation for the future.

SOURCES

Notes supplied by the different congregations.

PART IV

THE CONSOLIDATION PERIOD

"The missionaries should be mainly initiators, for the lasting work has to be done by the Africans themselves when they become Christians and Apostles".

(Cardinal Lavigerie)

CHAPTER VII

The Local Church

**Local Clergy take Command
Local Congregations**

The missionary is one who is on the move. His task, he believes, is to bring the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ to places where it has not yet been heard; to establish the Church; to nurture it and bring it to maturity; to establish a local clergy which will carry on the good work begun by him... and then move on to pastures new. If he does not move on but stays on the invitation of the new order, he takes a place backstage or in the wings out of the limelight; he relinquishes the role of driver and takes a back seat; the aging father hands over the running of the home to his children knowing that in his old age they will look after him: *Mtoto hawezi kumdharau baba yake* (a child cannot despise his father) is a Kenyan saying.

If we accept the Church as being the totality of the People of God, then the Church in Kenya has been local from the start, beginning with the first baptisms. In this sense the localisation of the church in Kenya got off to a slow start indeed but was this not to be expected? Naturally there was fear that becoming a Christian was making too great a break with traditions handed down from time immemorial. The acceptance of the new religion meant giving up traditional sacrifices and rituals, relinquishing the benefits of having many wives, saying "Goodbye" to the exciting beat of the lively dances which were condemned by the early missionaries as dangerously immoral, leading to disorders, as the *Bura Journal* euphemistically puts it! What advantages had the new religion to offer anyway? Could it ensure the allurements of an overnight Utopia, and if not why embrace it? No, the old ways were best. However, the First World War brought about the beginning of change. Many British ex-soldiers got land in Kenya in part payment for their military services and at the same time the British Press began advertising Kenya as a settler's paradise with land "going for a song". The number of whites increased bringing with them the obvious advantages of their skills. Not only that, but they brought the key to getting such skills – education, the key to a more advantageous and prosperous way of life. From the start the missions had provided education, but it had been more or less restricted to religion and the three R's. Now the mission schools moved with the times and offered a wider curriculum of studies and they began to attract more pupils. The education they dispensed involved, in most cases, the acceptance of their religion. And so year after year class after class of pupils accepted baptism and the Church grew numerically. In many cases parents sent their children to the mission schools not so much

to become Christians as to become fitted for a better way of life, and in time many of the pupils adopted this attitude themselves. This led to the existence of nominal Christians – a phenomenon, indeed, not restricted to mission countries! The rush for education increased after the Second World War which opened the eyes of many young Kenyans who saw overseas service in the army and returned with stories of a world beyond the imagination and confines of the family or village *boma*. Gradually the mass media was penetrating into the homes of the average Kenyan who could now read the newspapers and listen to the radio. The schools began to burst at the seams and with their fantastic growth there followed a similar one in church rolls. By 1990 the Catholic Church in Kenya passed the five million mark, becoming the largest church in the country .

ADMINISTRATION AND STRUCTURES

Here, however, we are thinking more of the administration of the Church and its evolving structures; we are thinking of the running of the Church being transferred from the hands of the founding missionaries to those of the newly formed indigenous clergy. But first let us see Mombasa in its geographical context as we see it going through the following stages of formation. Mombasa first became part of an ecclesiastical jurisdiction in 1883 when it was part of the newly erected Vicariate Apostolic of Zanzibar which stretched from Cape Guardafui in present day Somalia to Cape Delgado in Mozambique, a distance of 1300 miles, with no boundaries set inland in the vast continent. In 1897 the portion of what had become British East Africa bordering Lake Victoria, roughly Western Kenya today, was entrusted to the Mill Hill Fathers as the Vicariate Apostolic of the Upper Nile, later becoming that of Kisumu. The year 1902 saw a further division around Mount Kenya which became The Vicariate Apostolic of Nyeri entrusted to the Consolata Fathers. So by 1902, Mombasa found itself in a smaller, but still vast region, including the rest of present day Kenya and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba and still called The Vicariate Apostolic of Zanzibar. In 1953 the hierarchy was established in Kenya and the Vicariate of Zanzibar ceased to exist. It was divided into the Archdiocese of Nairobi (to which Mombasa and the islands still belonged) and the Dioceses of Kisumu, Nyeri and Meru. There was great rejoicing in Mombasa when in 1955 Rome declared it to be a diocese in its own right. The first bishop of the Diocese of

Mombasa and Zanzibar, Bishop Eugene Butler CSSp, was consecrated in 1957 and installed by Archbishop John McCarthy, Archbishop of Nairobi. The final slicing up of territory came in 1963 when Zanzibar gained its independence from Kenya. Ecclesiastically it was erected into an Administration Apostolic and the Diocese of Mombasa came to rest, so to speak. From being a tiny speck in the original ecclesiastical map of East Africa, Mombasa was now able to boast of its own territory of 38,000 square miles corresponding to the civil Coast Province, with a population of almost 1,300,000 people.

FIRST KENYAN BISHOPS

After devoting twenty one years to Mombasa, Bishop Butler retired in 1978 because of failing health. The news that his successor was to be an African was welcomed all over the diocese. Mombasa was coming of age! Bishop Nicodemus Kirima, born in Karatina, remained in Mombasa until his transfer to his home country in Nyeri in 1988. He made his mark on both clergy and laity as being a man of prayer. His rule was a gentle and sympathetic one. Under him great developments took place in the diocese as we shall see later.

Bishop Kirima's successor was Bishop John Njenga who had been Bishop of Eldoret since 1970. He hailed from Tigoni in Limuru and was ordained in 1957. He was welcomed with open arms – literally! – at his installation in Mombasa Municipal Stadium on February 12th 1989. There was great satisfaction among Mombasa Catholics when in May 1990 it was announced that Mombasa had been raised to the status of Archdiocese. Great enthusiasm was shown during the installation of Archbishop Njenga by the Pope's Pro-Nuncio to Kenya Clemente Faccani on July 29th in the grounds of the Holy Ghost Cathedral. Such a step in the history of Mombasa is indeed a mark of recognition by Rome of the role played by Kenya's mother church during the hundred years in which her religious family was growing up to reach the stage of maturity in which the Catholic Church in Kenya finds itself today.

THE LOCAL CLERGY

The first Kenyan priests to be ordained were Frs James Camisassa and Thomas Kemango. That was in 1927. At the coast it is well known that

everything moves slowly, and although other parts of the country saw the growth of a local clergy springing up it was not until 1961 that Mombasa saw its first diocesan priest ordained. This was Fr Isidore Onyango, a true son of Mombasa, having been born and bred there and having his vocation to the priesthood nurtured in the shadow of Makupa mission. Fr Isidore met an untimely death in a road accident in April 1969 – the first of many of Mombasa’s priests to die on Kenya’s roads. Meanwhile, Fr Alois Ngoma, from Ngerenyi, Wundanyi, had been ordained in 1963, Mombasa’s second diocesan priest, and the first from Taita. Frs Onyango and Ngoma belonged to the old school as they had begun their studies when Mombasa was still part of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. When the Diocese of Mombasa and Zanzibar was formally erected in 1955, Fr Patrick McCambridge was appointed its Administrator awaiting the nomination and installation of its first bishop. Fr McCambridge had his priorities right and lost no time in opening a Diocesan Junior Seminary. St Mary’s Seminary, with Fr Thomas Roche as Rector and Fr Edward Corcoran as Assistant opened its doors at Standard Five Intermediate level to the first intake of twenty boys. This was in January 1957. Its beginnings were humble – in borrowed buildings at St Michael’s Mission, Mwabayanyundo, Giriama. It was also started illegally as far as the Ministry of Education was concerned as it and neighbouring St George’s High School were opened before approval had been received. Many anxious weeks and months went by until its existence was begrudgingly accepted as a *fait accompli* by the government thanks to the diplomacy of Fr William Jenkinson, the Diocesan Education Secretary. The seminary moved to its present site in Kwale Township in 1960 and over the years, as well as preparing many pupils for the Senior Seminary, it built up a reputation as a secondary school second to none in the Coast Province. It is interesting to note that the first priest to be ordained for the new diocese was a member of the very first intake in 1957. Fr Damien Manyatta was ordained in 1972 and from that date until today Mombasa has seen the ordination of forty diocesan priests. Side by side with this growth in vocations to the diocese there has also been a steady growth in vocations to the missionary-religious life especially in congregations working locally such as the Holy Ghost and Consolata Fathers. The same is true of vocations to the Sisterhood, both diocesan – the sisters of St Joseph – and international – Loreto, Sisters of Our Lady of Africa and others.

EXPANSION OF DIOCESAN PROJECTS

Growth in Mombasa was not confined to the growth in vocations both to the priesthood and sisterhood. Bishop Butler started, and his successors continued and strengthened many diocesan projects, principally under the aegis of the Diocesan Secretariat opened in 1976. In order to meet the growing needs of the diocese several departments were inaugurated including the following: vocations, youth, development, education, religious education, communications, women's affairs. These departments did not confine their activities to Mombasa Town only but reached out to the people in the rural areas. This is true particularly in the field of religious education as is seen in the diocesan-wide work of the former R.E.A.P. (Religious Education Awareness Programme) which is now in the hands of the Diocesan Catechetical Team. The same is true with the care of the sick. Several health centres and dispensaries, mostly in the care of the Sisters of St Joseph, grew up all over the diocese.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

What was said earlier of the slow start of the church in Kenya followed by a phenomenal growth is also true of Mombasa. In the fifties and the sixties hitherto half empty schools became full; new Catholic schools began to mushroom and surprisingly girls started flocking to them for education. As the number of Catholics began to increase, principally through the schools, the diocese looked for more help from outside its confines. This help came in the personnel of both missionary orders (Consolata, Maryknoll, Mary Hill, Apostles of Jesus) and diocesan congregations: Sisters of Mary Immaculate, and the recently arrived Sisters from Nigeria – Immaculate Heart, Daughters of Divine Love and Handmaids of the Holy Child.

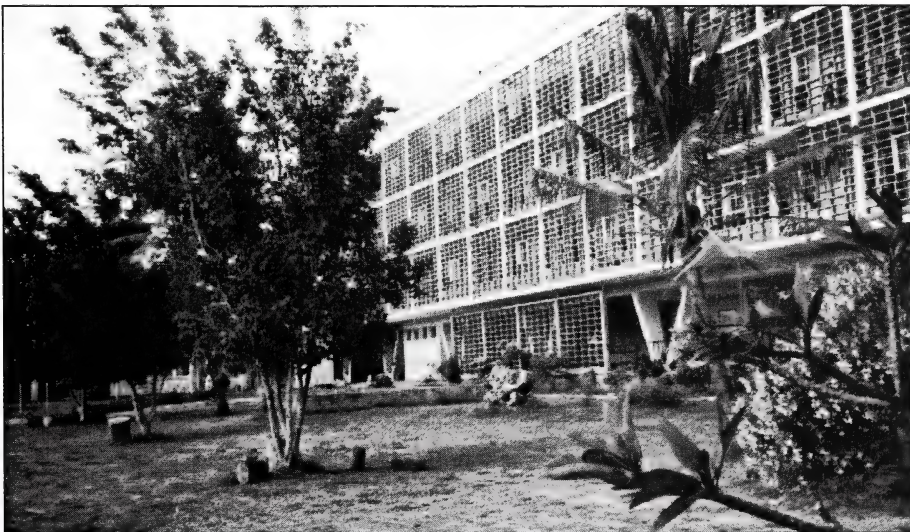
Day by day, week by week the Church in Mombasa continues to grow. When Bishop Butler arrived in Mombasa there were less than ten parishes in the diocese. When he retired the number was well over twenty, and today it stands at thirty five catering for 120,000 Catholics out of a total of 1,300,000 people.

A most important factor that has led to this growth of the Church all around us was the introduction of Small Christian Communities, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo*, as a result of the AMECEA Bishops' Meeting of 1979. By 1983 several



Star of the Sea Secondary School, Mombasa

small communities were in existence, and as the priests struggled with this new approach to their ministry, the first firmly established ones were already in evidence here and there. After the usual slow start in such matters they began to grow well in the town parishes and the fruits of the venture began to show; more baptisms and marriages, better attendance at the sacraments of reconciliation and eucharist, greater involvement of the faithful in church affairs such as choir, scripture readings, sodalities etc. and greater lay leadership.



Loreto Convent Primary School, Mombasa

A NEW IMPETUS

All of these initiatives made steady progress under the guidance of Bishop Nicodemus Kirima, first Kenyan bishop of Mombasa Diocese. The arrival of Bishop, now Archbishop, John Njenga in 1989 gave a new impetus to the life of the Church. He brought with him a wealth of experience from his long term as Bishop of Eldoret Diocese, and from the start showed himself to be a man of action, one to get things done! The most striking aspect of this input has probably been in the line of Catholic education and in stressing the importance of teaching Catholic doctrine in the schools. By 1990 he had already opened a new Catholic school – St Teresa's in Chaani, Mombasa – as well as helping to build up that of Sagala and the Catholic sponsored school at Ndavaya. Furthermore, to plan for the future and to ensure the availability of sufficient Catholic teachers, Dr Njenga established a Catholic Teacher Training College at Bura. It opened its doors to the first intake of 120 students on May 14th 1990.

As well as this the Archbishop, in his efforts to promote healthcare, established several new dispensaries such as Kikambala, Mtopanga and several other places. Looking forward to the pastoral needs of the apostolate in his archdiocese he has had a second stream added to St Mary's Seminary, Kwale. In view of all these projects it can be safely said that under the leadership of Archbishop Njenga the future of Mombasa Archdiocese is looking bright.

DIOCESAN SISTERS: ARCHDIOCESAN CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH

The final week of Kenya's Centenary Year of Faith was one of extraordinary witness to the strength, vitality and devotion of the Catholic Church in Kenya today. Thousands of Catholics (estimated at 30,000 at the closing Mass on Sunday August 12th) took part in liturgies, exhibitions, lectures and entertainments all revolving round the growth of the Church's humble beginnings to its prominent place in the Kenya of today. One thing which must have struck everybody is surely the large number of Kenyan Religious Sisters who took part. The fact that today there are ninety congregations of Sisters in the country, whose juniorates and novitiates are full to the brim, points to the solidity of the faith in our midst. Very much in

evidence among these Sisters were the Mombasa Archdiocesan Sisters of St Joseph. We concluded our section on the Precious Blood Missionary Sisters who were responsible for the foundation of this congregation with their own words: "Grown as a branch of the Precious Blood Sisters, the redemptive power of the Precious Blood is now flowing through the prayer, sacrifice and service of the St Joseph Sisters as a blessing for their fellow Africans in Mombasa, Nairobi and Kitui".

BEGINNINGS

When the Precious Blood Sisters returned to Bura in 1925 they began to think how best to begin a congregation of Kenyan Sisters. Sister Rosaline was instrumental in getting together the first little flock of four girls from the Juniorate at their convent at Riruta, Nairobi. These arrived in Bura in 1929. They were followed by two more the following year also from Riruta. The year 1931 saw four enter from St Austin's Mission, Nairobi and in 1932 the first aspirants from Bura joined. That same year Sister Meinrada took over from Sister Rosalina and she in turn was followed by Sister Amadea who was to become the first Superior General of the St Joseph Sisters. In 1935 a number of these aspirants went to Moshi, Tanzania, with the intention of joining the Diocesan Congregation of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro and became postulants. However this congregation later decided to recruit Tanzanian girls only; the Kenyans returned to Bura. Finding that they could not settle down, however, they all left!

FOUNDATION AND FIRST NOVICES

At this point there were five postulants in Bura, hanging in mid air, so to speak. The superior of the mission, Fr Michael Finnegan CSSp, approached the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop John W. Heffernan, for permission to found a congregation of local Sisters at Bura. Permission being granted, the Congregation of the St Joseph Sisters was founded on December 8th 1938 with Sister Amadea as the first superior. *Furaha kweli* is the reaction in the history of the Congregation submitted for this work. The Novitiate opened on December 15th 1939 with the first four novices, all of whom were later professed and became pillars of strength to the infant congregation. They were Mary Wanjiru (later Sister Mary, the only one of the four alive today);

Anna Nyambura (Sister Teresa who was to become the first African Superior General); Rosalia Nyambura (Sister Joseph); and Cecilia Tatu (Sister Martha). This group made their first vows on December 8th 1941 with Bishop Heffernan presiding at the ceremony. Their first appointments are given as follows: "Sister Mary – garden; Sister Teresa – primary school teacher; Sisters Joseph and Martha – kitchen to learn how to cook European food!" Apparently the latter two did not always understand the instructions of the German Precious Blood Sisters teaching them with the result that often the result of the finished product of their cooking left much to be desired... a fact that led to "scolding and penances!" The four Sisters took their final vows on the Feast of the Assumption 1951 and we are told: "Thus we see that the tree planted in Mombasa is now bringing great hopes for a lasting future".

EARLY DIFFICULTIES

The little congregation grew slowly but surely in spite of the many difficulties which its early members encountered. Housing was one of their greatest problems – it was insufficient and overcrowded. "The Sisters, novices and postulants shared one house of three rooms, one serving as the Sisters' bedroom, another as that of the novices and postulants and the third as a dining room". The daily food was poor – "...porridge for breakfast, stiff porridge and a little cabbage for lunch, and supper was cassava and porridge. They got meat on Sundays, just a piece". Another problem was that of getting suitable spiritual books. Fr Edward Fitzgerald, who became the Sisters' spiritual director, wrote to the Benedictines at Ndanda and the White Fathers in Tabora, "...but they had little to offer. But among what we did get were two sets of three volumes of *Rodrigues* in Swahili!" Another unfortunate element of those early days is that the Sisters felt that they were second class citizens, being cooks and *dhobies* to the missionary Fathers and Sisters and little more. The extraordinary thing is that in spite of these hardships and the resulting loss of many potential vocations, the infant congregation, under the wise guidance of Sister Amadea, drew a spiritual strength which was to be one of their characteristics thereafter. We are told: "They were very faithful to their prayer life and very simple in their life style. By looking back at them we get the spirit of our congregation – simplicity, service and prayer... and all for the service of God".

A NEW DAWN

1957 saw the end of the dark night of the soul of these early years of hardship with the arrival of Bishop Eugene Butler CSSp, the first Bishop of the newly erected Diocese of Mombasa and Zanzibar which had been cut off from the Archdiocese of Nairobi. On his first visit to Bura he was appalled by the conditions in which the Sisters were living. He immediately set about getting money to establish a proper Mother House. Fr Gerry Foley, Principal of Taveta Trade School, was put in charge of the project, and this was to be the beginning of a long association between Fr Foley and the future building projects of the Sisters. The new Mother House was ready in December 1960, and remains so today although the Generalate transferred to Kafoka, Mombasa in 1982. A beautiful oratory was added to the Mother House in 1971.

January 1961 was a great date for the Sisters. A canonical election took place during which the first African Superior General was elected. She was one of the founding four – Sister Teresa Nyambura. Two assistants were also elected – Sr Martha Tatu and Sister Agnes Makumbo who became Novice Mistress, a post hitherto held by Sister Amadea. Having given twenty five years of her life to founding and nourishing the Congregation of St Joseph, Sister Amadea retired to enjoy a well deserved rest. “No doubt”, we read in the historical notes of the Congregation, “the Sisters of St Joseph, especially those privileged to be trained by her, will remember with gratitude her humility and kindness, her spirit of prayer and her unlimited patience during those early traumatic years”.

Thanks to these new leaders and to the continued help – financial, spiritual and moral – of Bishop Butler, the congregation got a new lease of life. “So within a year there were great improvements in all aspects ... life was very much improved”. Bishop Butler was responsible for sending Sister Teresa and Sister Marietta Mkawughanga overseas for a two year upgrading course which gave them a solid grounding for future administration. This policy of sending Sisters abroad for further studies and training in various fields has been continued by Bishop Kirima and Archbishop Njenga. Back home Sisters started going to secondary schools and teacher training colleges, mingling with their classmates, participating in the school and college activities (one remembers Sister Florence throwing the javelin in the Mombasa Municipal Stadium!) and enjoying every minute of it. “Due to the

changes of management and the day to day running of the Congregation, we got a 'new look' which attracted many girls to join us". Another milestone was the building of the new novitiate in Kwale beside the Junior Seminary. This opened in 1973 with thirty eight novices. The Sisters were most fortunate in getting a full time chaplain in the person of Fr James Griffin, and later on, Frs James Lynch and Edward Corcoran.

Sister Teresa Nyambura who had led the Congregation from 1961 to 1973 was followed by Sister Agnes Makumbo who, in the few years until her death in 1978, in her own gentle way spurred the Congregation on to greater heights. "She was more concerned about the spiritual welfare of the Sisters than anything else. She went from convent to convent seeing how the Sisters lived their spiritual life, instructing and advising them". She opened houses in Nairobi and Kitui, saw that as many Sisters as possible got secondary education, and more than anything else, by her calm and peaceful presence, was a living example of one united closely to Christ – a living inspiration to her fellow Sisters".

These two pioneering Kenyan Superiors were followed by other stalwarts – Sister Marietta Mkawughanga (1978-1983); Teresa Mutio (1983-1988) and the present Superior General Sister Angela Loko. Under their inspired guidance the Congregation has grown "in age and grace before God and men" until today it numbers over 150 professed members. The St Joseph Sisters are to be found teaching in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, nursing in dispensaries, involved in social work, engaged in administration, agriculture formation and secretarial posts. Thirty two are engaged in further studies or training of one kind or another both at home and abroad... and the future is assured with an enrolment of sixteen novices and six postulants.

The Apostolate of the St Joseph Sisters is described as follows in their own words:

The aim of our Congregation is evangelisation – to make Christ known. We show this in different ways depending on our work. We aim at evangelising people by doing our work well for the Glory of God, and for the uplifting of the standard of living of the ordinary person. We do this by:

1. Teaching catechism to children in school, women in villages, men in the mission after work or in the villages in community groups; giving teachers more religious knowledge and strengthening them as Catholics, helping them to know how to pass on the Good News to the children they teach in their schools.



Mother House, Bura - 1960

2. Social Work:

While giving religious instruction, the sisters see the condition of the people they deal with. In the case of poor or sick people they help them on the spot if they can, otherwise they direct them to our dispensaries where they can get free or cheap medicine depending on the person's situation. The Sisters also take care of orphans, thus helping to preserve the life of many babies whose mothers die after giving birth. They also try to help prostitutes by teaching crafts by which they can make a living.

3. Teaching in schools; helping in small Christian communities and sodalities.



Novitiate, Kwale - 1972

4. Nursing.
5. Secretarial occupations
6. Farming
7. Home Science institutions.

Our Sisters take up any apostolate which is appropriate to our life provided it aims at helping people. Through the love and devotion which the St Joseph Sisters apply to their apostolate as outlined above they render an immense service to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Mombasa for which the Church is thankful.

SISTERS OF MARY IMMACULATE

The Sisters of Mary Immaculate of the Diocese of Nyeri came to Mombasa in 1977 at the request of Bishop Butler. They were fortunate in getting a sufficiently large house in the Tononoka area without much difficulty. The pioneers were Sister Mary Florence Wangare, a primary school teacher and Sister Leah Githiori, a catechist. Sister Florence started teaching at Sparki primary school and Sister Leah at Chagamwe nursery school. The first nursing Sisters Rose Muthoni and Rose Mumbi arrived in 1978 and they promptly opened a dispensary. Before long they saw the need for a maternity home but owing to red tape in the Ministry of Health offices they had to wait until 1982 to get under way. That same year, Fr Thomas Barron at Shanzu Parish asked for Sisters. Sister Angelica Wanjiku was appointed as a tailoring instructress and Sister Euphrasia Nyakio as a primary school teacher. Their job description was as follows: "The two Sisters will help the local people with *Maendeleo ya Wanawake*, catechetical work and all other activities which are necessary in a new foundation". The Sisters tell us: "Wherever we go we try to do our best in pastoral work by nursing, doing social and secretarial work and other activities that enable us to bring God's love to the people. We entrust ourselves to our Blessed Mother who will bless us, our work and all those working with us".

SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY MOTHER OF CHRIST

The Bishop of Eldoret, Bishop John Njenga, in his search for religious Sisters for his ever growing diocese, turned to Nigeria where there were

many flourishing congregations among the Catholic Ibo people. On his transfer to Mombasa, he invited three Nigerian Congregations to come and work here. This congregation was founded in 1937 by Archbishop Charles Heerey CSSp in Onitsha. The specific apostolic aims of the Congregation are: “The training of girls and women for marriage and other sacraments; the education of children in schools; the special care of the sick in hospitals, dispensaries and orphanages; and any other work of charity in keeping with our constitutions”. The Congregation grew rapidly and being missionary in character, many of its members now work in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Kenya and Italy. In Mombasa at the time of writing Sister Vitalis Iheanacho Mwaoguriguri is attached to the Archbishop’s House; Sister Mary Sedes teaches in Kongowea Primary School and Sister Luciana Wanyahoro, a catechist in Kongowea parish. Today there are over five hundred professed Sisters with fifty novices and forty postulants in this society. The Sisters sum up their apostolate as follows: Our Spirit is humility; our motto is ‘All for Jesus through Mary’, and our charism is “The Compassion of Christ”.

THE CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF DIVINE LOVE

The Daughters of Divine Love Congregation was founded by Bishop Godfrey Okoye, Bishop of Enugu, in 1969. It is a congregation “which combines contemplation and apostolic activity”. It numbers about four hundred professed Sisters, eighty novices and a good number of postulants. It has houses in Cameroun, Gabon, Sierra Leone, England, Germany and Rome. In Kenya it has houses at Kiminini in Eldoret, opened in 1988, and Chaani in Mombasa opened in 1989. In Mombasa the pioneers were Sister Mary Basil Nwoke and Sister Mary Olivia Agbakoba, both teaching in St Teresa’s Catholic Girls’ School, Chaani. The Sisters tell us that their apostolate embraces education, catechetics, medical services, social work, parish assistance and vocational training. “Our motto is *Caritas Christi Urget Nos* – The love of Christ urges us on and our charism is a generous loving response to Divine Love Incarnate”.

CONGREGATION OF THE HANDMAIDS OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

Thanks to the Inspiration of Sister Mary Charles Walker, an Irish Sister of Charity, this Congregation was founded by Bishop James Moynagh S.P.S. in

1937 at Calabar, Nigeria. "Our congregation" we are told, "is totally dedicated to the service of God and humanity and aims at promoting the glory of God by bearing witness to the charity of Christ, making him better known and loved in our active apostolate thus providing for the members' own salvation and greater perfection. Our primary apostolate is the witness of our consecrated life which we foster by prayer and penance. We are dedicated to apostolic work and we cooperate with all God's people in building the local church and participating in her pastoral work. We are engaged in educational, medical and social apostolates as well as catechetics and domestic works according to individual ability and aptitude".

The first five Sisters arrived in Eldoret in October 1988, and were followed by a second group who came to Bura on May 14th 1990, namely, Sisters Patricia Okwuo, Rosemary Chiemeke and Agnes N.Nodi. They are members of the staff of the newly opened St Mary's Teacher Training College at Bura.

The Congregation's present and future plans in Mombasa are as follows:

- (a) To cooperate with the local Church in the Archdiocese in the work of evangelisation.
- (b) To promote vocations to the religious life. Their aspiration is to have many Sisters of Kenyan nationality who will dedicate their lives to the work of evangelisation in Kenya. The Congregation is international with members from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cameroun, Togo, Kenya, England and they plan to have houses in Europe, America and other parts of Africa.

SOURCES

Historical Notes submitted by the congregations of Sisters.

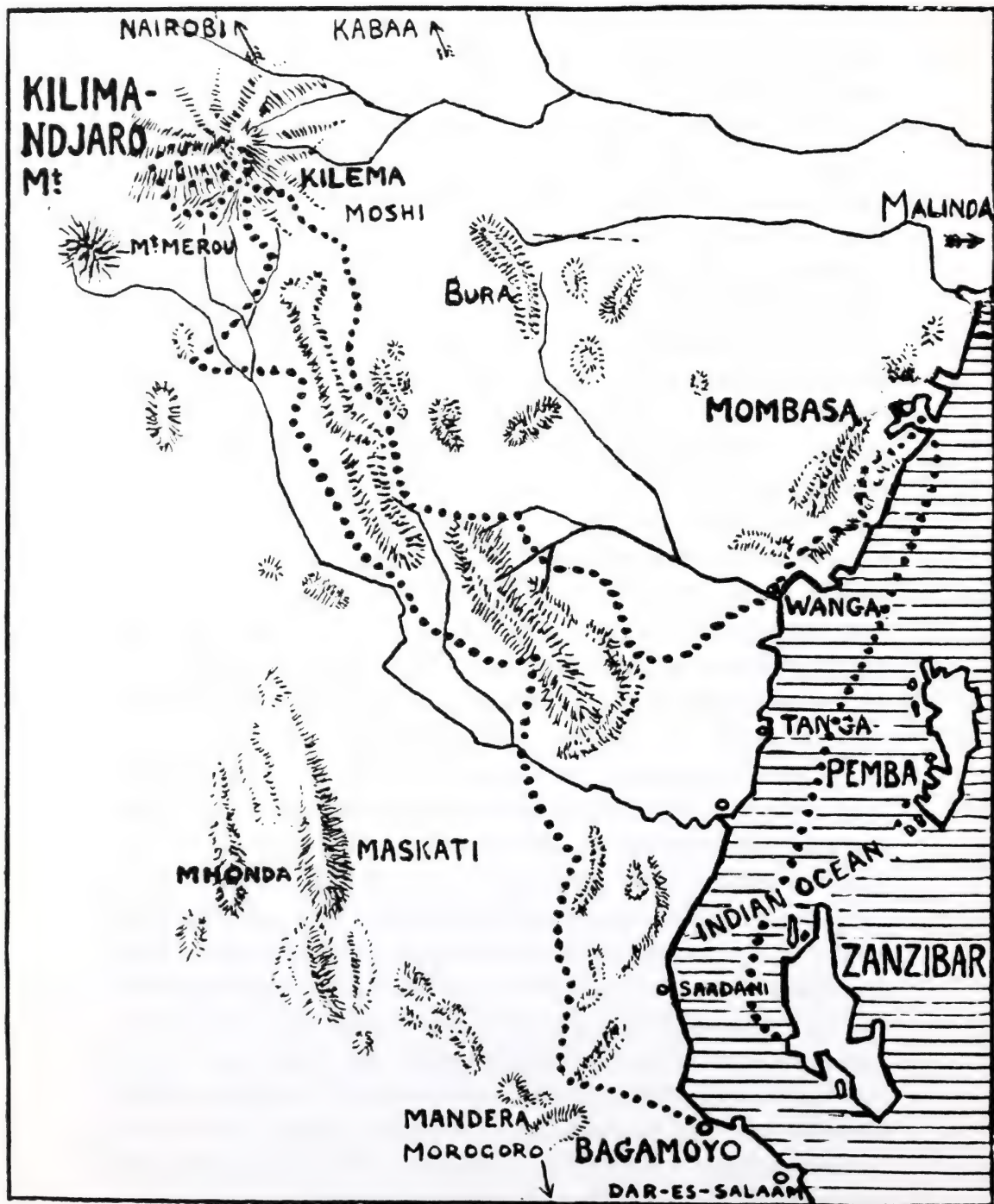
EPILOGUE

“The Kingdom of Heaven”, Jesus said, “is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches” (Matthew 13). Jesus Himself was the first sower of this tiny seed in the equally tiny country of Israel. He was followed by others, some outstanding like Paul and Francis Xavier, others very ordinary and unwritten in the history annals.

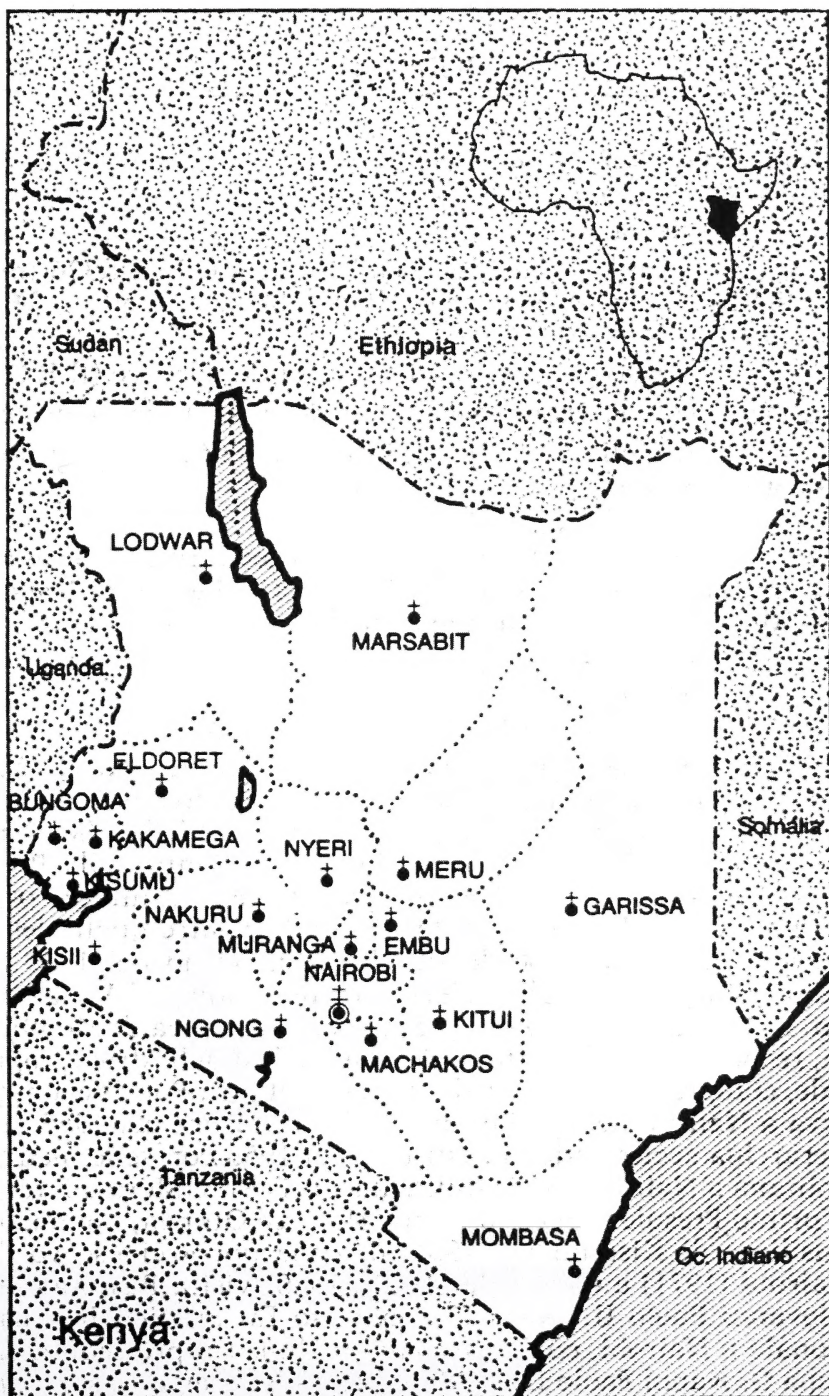
Our own sower here in Mombasa and consequently Kenya was, as we have seen, Fr Alexander Le Roy CSSp. His, indeed, was a *pusillus grex* – a tiny flock – as was that of the early missionaries for many a long year. But, as Saint Mark tells us, “...night and day while he (the sower) sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing – how, he does not know. And when the crop is ready he loses no time; he starts to reap because the harvest has come” (Mark 4).

This short history of the Church in Mombasa has been an attempt to follow that growth, at first hidden and slow, then gaining momentum, and eventually reaching a very visible and formidable harvest. We shared the feelings of our early missionaries as expressed in their invaluable journals; we shared their hardship, their frustrations, their near despair, but also their deep faith and trust in God’s providence which kept them going. We have seen the emergence of the local church, its solidity and vitality. These two characteristics were in evidence in Mombasa during the final week of the Kenyan church’s centenary celebration. The numbers of the faithful who attended Mass every day in the municipal stadium in the heat of the day, their devotion, the periods of silence after the reception of Holy Communion were awe inspiring; their participation in the singing and responses during the liturgies; their sheer joy echoed in their *vigelegele*; their attendance at the afternoon lectures and exhibitions – all this could leave nobody in doubt as to the depth of their faith and their sense of fulfilment in it. Add to this the splendid pomp and ceremony surrounding the raised altar around which the Kenyan Hierarchy offered daily Mass (only two were unable to be present on the final day); add also the pavilion behind the altar thronged with Kenyan priests, seminarians, brothers and seemingly numberless Sisters ... and what have you got? You have a local church which has arrived and moreover which is moving ahead rapidly.

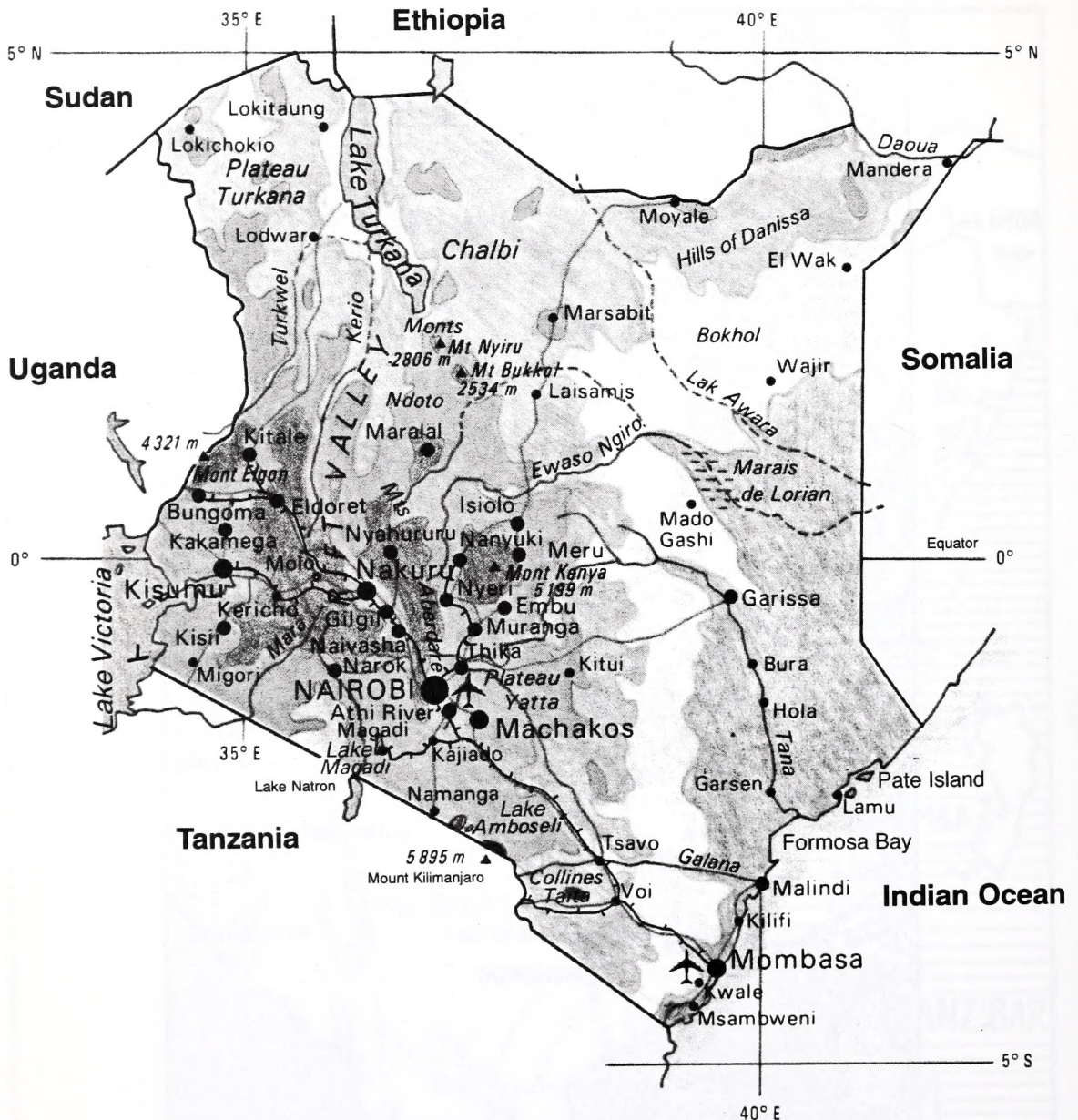
Early Efforts on the East Coast



Dioceses of Kenya



Kenya 1997



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**Spiritan Residence,
POB 14621,
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Kenya.**

Tel: 254 244 4165
FAX: 254 244 7899

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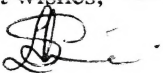
Dear Father,

Please find enclosed a copy of Fr Eddie Corcoran's book on Mombasa Mission. You should find this interesting reading.

If you can help defray the expenses to the district of Kenya for this production I would be very grateful to you. To save administration, you might be able to send a cheque for £10 directly to Paraclete Press, 169 Booterstown Avenue, Co. Dublin.

I do hope you can help us out on this.

Best wishes,



Laurence Shine CSSp
Superior District of Kenya

**Mombasa Miss
Church in Mombasa**

Duquesne University

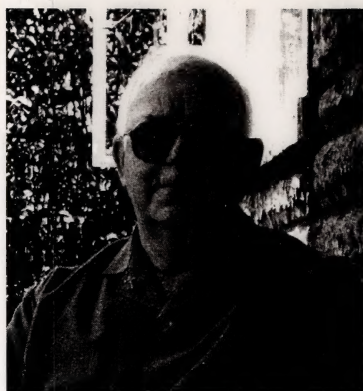


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Edward Corcoran CSSp.



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Fr. Edward Corcoran



***Cathedral of The Holy Ghost,
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